Published
Monthly by the
NATIONAL
MUNICIPAL
LEAGUE
Volume XXI, No. 8
TOTAL NO. 194

NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW

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THE LEAGUE'S BUSINESS

Nomination of Officers for 1933.—The Committee on Nominations has nominated the following officers for 1933, subject to election at the annual meeting of the National Municipal League during the thirty-eighth annual convention in Washington, D. C., on September 19, 20 and 21:

President, Murray Seasongood, Cincinnati; *First Vice-President,* Louis Brownlow, Chicago; *Second Vice-President,* Mrs. F. Louis Slade, New York; *Honorary Vice Presidents,* Henry J. Allen, Wichita, Kansas; Charles A. Beard, New Milford, Conn.; Harry F. Byrd, Winchester, Va.; Frederic A. Delano, Washington, D. C.; Samuel S. Fels, Philadelphia; John M. Gries, Washington, D. C.; A. R. Hatton, Evanston, Ill.; John R. Haynes, Los Angeles; Frank O. Lowden, Oregon, Ill.; C. E. Merriam, Chicago; W. B. Munro, Pasadena; Frank L. Polk, New York; Thomas H. Reed, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Chester H. Rowell, Berkeley, Cal.; Samuel Seabury, New York; Miss Belle Sherwin, Washington, D. C.; Silas H. Strawn, Chicago; A. Leo Weil, Pittsburgh. *Council*: Harold S. Buttenheim, New York; Mayo Fesler, Cleveland; Raymond V. Ingersoll, New York; Morris B. Lambie, Minneapolis; William P. Lovett, Detroit; Mrs. Virgil Loeb, St. Louis; Henry L. Shattuck, Boston; C. O. Sherrill, Cincinnati; Henry M. Waite, Cincinnati; Morton L. Wallerstein, Richmond, Va.

* * *

Proposed Revision of the Constitution.— The Committee on Nominations was also asked by the president to suggest revisions in the constitution of the National Municipal League. At the annual meeting in Washington in September the Committee will recommend the adoption of a new constitution which in general embodies only those changes necessary to bring the organization policy in line with present practice. The principal changes to be recommended by the committee are as follows:

1. The present constitution now provides three classes of membership. The committee recommends that five classes be provided as follows: active ($5); sustaining ($10); contributing ($25 and upward); patron ($100 and upward); and honorary life members exempt from payment of dues.

2. The constitution now provides that the president *shall* be chairman of the council. The committee recommends that the constitution provide that the president *may or may not be* chairman of the council.

3. The committee recommends that the officers of the League be as follows: a president, a first vice-president, a second vice-president, a council of thirty members, not more than twenty-five regional and honorary vice-presidents, a treasurer, and a secretary.

4. The committee recommends that the executive committee shall carry on the affairs of the League between meetings of the council, but subject to its *approval;* the constitution now provides that the executive committee shall be subject to the *direction* of the council.

5. The committee recommends that the president shall appoint all committees subject to confirmation by the council or executive committee.

6. A nominating committee of five members who shall report at least thirty days before the annual meeting is recommended instead of a committee of nine members to report sixty days before the meeting.

7. The constitution now provides that the council shall have power to fix the date of the annual meeting. The committee recommends that the executive committee be given joint authority with the council over this subject.

8. It is recommended that the treasurer may at his option draw checks in favor of the secretary, to be disbursed in turn by checks signed by the secretary provided such disbursements are authorized by the council or executive committee. This has been the practice for many years past although not specifically authorized by the constitution.

The Committee on Nominations and Revision of the Constitution has the following personnel: Howard Strong, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., *chairman;* J. Catron Jones, Lexington, Ky.; Morris B. Lambie, Minneapolis; and A. Leo Weil, Pittsburgh, Pa.

RUSSELL FORBES, *Secretary.*

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

38th Annual Meeting, National Municipal League

Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C., September 19, 20 and 21

General Subject: **PAYING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT DURING DEPRESSION**

The Hon. Murray Seasongood, president of the National Municipal League, and former Mayor of Cincinnati, will preside at all sessions.

All meetings open to the public. Visitors and members are cordially invited to join in the discussion.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

9:00 a.m. REGISTRATION.

10:00 a.m. COMMITTEE MEETINGS, National Municipal League (to be arranged).

12:30 p.m. JOINT LUNCHEON (All Coöperating Organizations)

Subject: **Citizen Support for Planning and Governmental Efficiency**
(Program being prepared by Miss Harlean James)

PAYING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT DURING DEPRESSION

2:30 p.m. GENERAL MEETING.

THE PROBLEM:

A. Increasing Demands Upon Government vs. Declining Revenues.

1. Opening remarks by Presiding Officer
2. *How Retrenchment in Industries Has Increased the Demands Upon Government*—Louis Brownlow, director, Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago
3. *Has the General Property Tax Broken Down?*—The Hon. Seabury C. Mastick, State Senator, New York
4. *The Pressure of Unemployment on City Treasuries*—Lawson Purdy, director, The Charity Organization Society, New York City
5. *Effect Upon Municipal Credit*—Carl H. Chatters, executive director, Municipal Finance Officers' Association, Chicago

Discussion

6:30 p.m. GENERAL MEETING

B. Cutting Costs vs. Elimination of Services.

1. *Must Taxes be Reduced?*—Silas Strawn, former president, Chamber of Commerce of the United States.
2. *Must the Schools be Sacrificed?*—William G. Carr, director, Research Division, The National Education Association, Washington, D. C.
3. *Can We Reduce Welfare Costs?*—Frank Bane, director, American Public Welfare Association, Chicago
4. *The Cost of Keeping a Community Healthy*—C. E. McCombs, Institute of Public Administration, New York City.

Discussion

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

10:00 a.m. GENERAL MEETING

B. Cutting Costs vs. Elimination of Services (continued)

5. *What We Pay for Police Protection*—O. W. Wilson, Chief of Police, Wichita, Kansas (invited)
6. *What We Pay for Fire Protection*—Geo. W. Booth, chief engineer, The National Board of Fire Underwriters, New York City
7. *Cost of Regulatory Inspection*—Miss Edna Trull, research secretary, Municipal Administration Service, New York City
8. *How Much Public Recreation is Essential?*—Roy Smith Wallace, National Recreation Association, New York City

Discussion

12:30 p.m. LUNCHEON

C. Planning Future Expenditures.

1. *Planning for Public Works in Times of Depression*—Col. D. H. Sawyer, director, Federal Employment Stabilization Board, Washington, D. C.
2. *Financing Public Works in Times of Depression*—Stephen B. Story, Rochester, New York

Discussion

2:30 p.m. GENERAL MEETING

THE SOLUTION

A. Through Unloading the Politician, Spoilsman and Racketeer.

1. *Can a City Government be Run Like an Efficient Private Business?*—C. A. Dykstra, City Manager of Cincinnati
2. *North Carolina Cleans House*—Governor O. Max Gardner of North Carolina
3. *What Price Racketeering—Breaking Up the Alliance Between Politics and Crime*—Gordon L. Hostetter, executive director, Employers' Association of Chicago

6:30 p.m. JOINT BANQUET (All coöperating organizations)
(Tentative Program as arranged by Harlean James)
SUBJECT—PARKS
Presiding: Honorable Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior

The Part Played by Participating Organizations.

(Three-Minute Responses)

Planning Points to Parks—Frederick S. Bigger, president, American City Planning Institute

Citizen Support for National and Local Parks—Frederic A. Delano, president, American Civic Association

Park Executives Administer Parks—Alfred MacDonald, president, American Institute of Park Executives

Legislators Favor State Parks— ————————————, American Legislators' Association

Civic Secretaries Work for Parks—H. Marie Dermitt, secretary, National Association of Civic Secretaries

Parks Lead the Way in Eliminating Billboards—Mrs. W. L. Lawton, chairman, National Council for Protection of Roadside Beauty

Parks a Major Municipal Problem—Hon. Murray Seasongood, president, National Municipal League

Proportional Representation Will Promote Parks—A. R. Hatton, president, Proportonal Representation League

Park Problems in Administration

Are Citizen Park Commissions Essential to Adequate Local Park Development?—Louis Brownlow, director, Public Administration Clearing House

How Westchester County Manages its Parks—Gilmore D. Clarke, Landscape Architect, Westchester County Park Commission and Member, National Commission of Fine Arts

National Park Service Administers the National Parks for the Use and Enjoyment of the People—Horace M. Albright, director, National Park Service

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

10:00 a.m. GENERAL MEETING

THE SOLUTION:

B. Through Change in the Area and Functions of Government.

1. *What Constitutes a Community for Purposes of Government?*—(speaker to be secured)
2. *Possibilities of Regional Government*—Thomas H. Reed, professor of political science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
3. *Adjustment in Functions Between City and County*—Emmett L. Bennett, director, Municipal Reference Bureau, University of Cincinnati

Discussion

12:30 p.m. LUNCHEON

C. Through Changes in the Structure of Government—Samuel Seabury, counsel, Hofstadter Legislative Investigating Committee, New York City (invited).

D. Through Improvement in Personnel–George McAneny, president, National Civil Service Reform League.

Discussion

2:30 p.m. GENERAL MEETING

E. Through Changes in the Incidence of Taxation.

1. *Taking the Burden From Real Estate*—Robert Murray Haig, professor of political economy, Columbia University and president, National Tax Association
2. *Taking the Burden from Improvements and Personal Property*—Harold S. Buttenheim, editor, the *American City*, New York City
3. *Undeveloped Sources of Municipal Revenue*—F. L. Bird, assistant director, Municipal Administration Service, New York City
4. *A Taxpayers Association in Action*—A. C. Rees, executive secretary, Utah Taxpayers Association and chairman, National Council of Taxpayers' Associations

Discussion

Arrangements will be made for excursion fare or reduced convention fare on all railroads for delegates attending this convention. The annual meetings of the following organizations will be held at the same time and place: American Civic Association, American Institute of Park Executives, American Legislators' Association, National Association of Civic Secretaries, National Council for Protection of Roadside Beauty and Proportional Representation League.

A number of entertainment features are being provided by the local committee on arrangements. The other sponsoring organizations will convene on Sunday, September 18, and on the afternoon of that day will enjoy a sight-seeing trip around Washington, with a supper meeting in the assembly room of the New Commerce Building. Two post-convention trips are also being planned. On Wednesday evening, September 21, a boat, *The District of Columbia,* will leave on a sight-seeing trip to the National Colonial Monuments and the Williamsburg Restoration in Virginia. A special week-end trip to the Shenandoah National Park is also planned for Friday, September 23, to Sunday, September 25.

Make your plans now to attend these meetings. You can scarcely afford to miss them!

Unrest in County Government

HARASSED taxpayers are awakening to the faults in our historic forms of county government and are taking steps to remedy them

BY HOWARD P. JONES *Secretary, N.M.L. Committee on County Government*

THE story is told of a board of supervisors of a Minnesota county, reluctant to respond to the demands of half a dozen leading citizens last spring that the county budget be cut at least ten per cent.

"If you can show us twenty-five more taxpayers who think as you do, we'll consider the matter," the chairman retorted, and postponed action until the next meeting.

When the board again assembled at the county courthouse, 2500 citizens were storming around the building, demanding to be heard. The budget was cut.

If the incident were an isolated one, it would be of no little significance. It is not—there has gone sweeping across the country like a prairie fire an irresistible demand that the cost of local government be reduced, no matter how that reduction be accomplished. At every crossroads store, at every public gathering, across the dinner table at home—wherever people gather, taxes and the cost of government are monopolizing conversation.

Perhaps for the first time since the Populist revolt, the farmer is as excited as the city man. What is more important to the observer of local government, he is wasting no time in vain speeches and little in violent partisan criticism; instead, he is looking critically at the high cost of local government, he is perhaps realizing that our local governments spend half again as much as state and federal governments combined; certainly he is beginning to see that the money he himself pays out as a result of the general property tax is too high a charge for the service he is getting. Not that he would care if times were good and he didn't miss the money. But today he not only misses the money—only too often he is unable to scrape enough together to pay his taxes and keep his farm. It was in conservative Methodist Iowa that angry farmers armed with pitchforks surrounded a place that was to have been sold for taxes, and prevented foreclosure.

Campaigns for tax reduction, unless directed by leaders completely blind, do not stop when the obvious thing has been done—reduction in salaries and elmination of such services as are non-essential, if any. They continue and perform their most outstanding service in examining critically the whole structure and variegated areas of local government, the relation of one area to another, the relative cost of running the public business this way as compared with that. They begin to perceive the relation of the spoils system to the high cost of local government and consider ways and means of replacing it with the merit system. And so it has come about that suddenly the country, on fire with a desire for change and a zeal to achieve,

has actually begun to tackle seriously that knottiest of all governmental tangles—the county.

AN ORGANIZATION A DAY

It has been estimated that county taxpayers' organizations were being formed this spring at the rate of one a day throughout the nation—a fact all the more remarkable when it is realized that these were relatively spontaneous. There were few paid organizers, traveling the highways and byways to weld such groups together. Their formation was stimulated, of course, through United States Chamber of Commerce propaganda and the hue and cry raised by big business, itself dancing or limping to the tune of "the bigger they are, the harder they fall."

Much of this propaganda has been hysterical. Business has been bearing so heavy a governmental burden it has broken down: thus would one of the favorite chants blame the monster "government" for the depression! Business has cut its costs and its activity way down, let government do the same: thus is another hymn intoned. One should almost blush to point out the obvious—that the demand for the products of business has vanished, whereas the demand for the services of government has been increased by the very lack of business activity! The result is that local government has been between the devil and the deep blue sea—faced on the one hand by insistent demands that governmental costs be reduced and on the other by social and economic pressure forcing an increase. Yet the popular refrain has been, "reduce taxes at any cost."

To the degree that this point of view has been adopted, much harm has been done. To the degree that a critical interest in the governmental machinery has been developed, much good may yet come out of it. Fortunately, all signs point to an increase of the critical examination of governmental services and the way in which they are administered as opposed to the reckless slashing of social services, without regard to possible irreparable damage done thereby.

PROGRESS RAPID THESE DAYS

It is beyond the reach of a bird's-eye view of recent progress in county government and a glimpse at the trends that are apparent such as contemplated in this article to list in detail the movements for improvement in county government that have reached a serious stage. That very fact indicates the amount of water that has gone over the dam in the past few months, since it is only a year or two ago that the genuine intelligent attempts to improve county government through redrawing boundaries and hammering new structure into place, could have been counted on the fingers of one hand.

Suffice it to say that, in almost every direction in which improvement in county government is possible—the alteration of area and structure, the redistribution of functions, the modernization of administrative procedure—progress is being made. Those who would think of the county as the early settler thought of the Indian, that the only good one is a dead one, have cause for gratification in the action of North Carolina a year ago in practically emasculating the county by amputating its functions. The same trend toward centralization of county functions in the state government has, surprisingly enough, become apparent in Virginia, the cradle of local self-government, in recent legislation turning control of the roads over to the state.

Authorities on local government have long been agreed that, desirable as it might seem to consolidate counties, it was impracticable. If there were nothing more than the necessity of obtaining the consent of the voters of the county on the point of moving the

county seat to another county, that alone would defeat such effort, it was thought. The influence of retail trade interests at the county seat of itself would wreck any movement for merger of counties.

MUCH TALK OF MERGERS

In spite of such predictions, mergers of counties in Tennessee and in Georgia have taken place, and efforts are being made in at least thirty-two states to bring about further mergers, either on a large or small scale. The compelling statistical comparisons contained in the report of the Brookings survey on county government in Mississippi are enough to convince the most skeptical of the possibilities of economies in this direction.

One thing should be realized in any consideration of county government—that on the altar of farm and home, the farmer will sacrifice almost anything. In two states he has already given evidence of his willingness to sell out his much vaunted rights of local self-government in return for lower taxes that he can pay. Tradition, the private preserves of political parties, the interests of special groups, local sentiment—in the last analysis each of these bulwarks against change will creak and fall if the farmer sees they must go in the cause of financial self-preservation.

For the farmer above all is a realist. He accepts change slowly—do the seasons change overnight? But once the change is visible and apparent, he is not the man to shut his eyes and deny the evidence of the senses. A wheat field succumbing to drought is a fact that may throttle his hopes and mean six months wasted labor, but it is as uncontrovertible in its lack of production as is the plenteous evidence of a bumper crop.

THE GROWING MANAGER MOVEMENT

The county manager movement, which promised much in its early experience in North Carolina and Virginia,[1] has yet to be tested by broad application. The adoption of the plan by Arlington County on January 1 this year paved the way for more conclusive demonstration than has as yet been available. Of even greater potential significance was the passage of a county manager enabling act[2] by the Montana legislature in 1931. At present there are movements to adopt the plan under this act in ten counties despite the fact that in February, 1932, Ravalli County voters rejected the plan at the polls. In San Mateo County, California, a board of freeholders is now engaged in drafting what will probably be a county manager charter.

Interest in the plan is widespread throughout the country, due to the common feeling that the most obvious weakness of county government is its headlessness. It seems probable that this interest will take fire in action, if and when experience writes a convincing record of the effectiveness of the plan where tried.

But when all is said and done, just what is the future of the county? One thing is certain—that it cannot long remain as a unit of local self-government unless it can be made to operate responsively and efficiently. For at present, self-government in rural areas is largely a fiction: that it is at the same time archaic and inefficient is like adding insult to injury.

STATE CONTROL VS. STRONG COUNTY

Two opposite tendencies are clearly apparent at the present time—one leading toward centralization of all rural services in the hands of the state; the other leading toward a strong county, of sufficient area, population and as-

[1] Alamance County, Cleveland County, Davidson County, Guilford County and Robeson County, North Carolina, and Albemarle County, Augusta County, Fairfax County, Pittsylvania County and Washington County, Virginia.

[2] Chapter 109, Session Laws of 1931.

sessed valuation to be able first, to support the services it requires, and second, to furnish the basis of an efficient administrative organization. For this latter, the manager plan is deemed essential as the structure of the governmental organization.

These two are the extremes. It is of course possible to visualize them growing side by side. State administrative control is not unthinkable tied in with local determination of policy, although to American minds, accustomed to the unequivocable separation of federal, state and local government, it takes a heap of thinking to visualize the combination in action. It would be perfectly possible to have local rural councils determining matters of local policy, which, once determined, are carried out by an administrative arm of the state government. Certainly it is logical and probably inevitable that the state will have more and more to say as to the administrative standard of the local unit of government, no matter how strong that unit may be.

There are, to be sure, any number of conflicting points of view and influences which complicate this picture. For effective local self-government, an area must be found large enough to lend itself to efficient administration and with the financial capacity to support the services it requires. Yet the very concept of local self-government delineates an area small enough to permit ready response on the part of its officials to local needs, desires and attitudes. All too infrequently is there correspondence between the social requirements of a given area and its economic capacity to meet those requirements. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the demands for public welfare services within a given area vary inversely with the wealth of the area.

EVEN EARTHQUAKES INADEQUATE

Then again, in considering the problem of the relation of functions and areas, there arises the question as to whether, after all, there is any such thing as a single desirable area for the administration of a particular service. It would take a whole flock of earthquakes, for instance, so to alter the topography of the country to make natural drainage areas harmonize with existing county lines. And if that happened, there might even then be a question as to whether the areas so divinely shaped would be equally well fitted for the administration of justice, the construction of roads, the maintenance of an educational system, the prevention of disease, the care of the poor and the eradication of mosquitoes.

All this is to omit consideration of the relation of the city to the county, the importance both socially and economically of developing a closer political relationship between the city or town and the surrounding countryside which feeds it and to beg the question as to whether the government of rural areas should be entirely separated from the government of urban or semi-urban areas. It is to overlook the differences in land utilization between urban, agricultural, forest and recreational areas and to neglect deliberately the annoying inquiry as to whether, after all, there is any single solution that is preferable in view of the wide differences in the history, tradition, topographical, social and economic problems of the various areas in the various states.

But, all theory aside, there is an opportunity before those interested in local government that has never existed before and may never come again. Enthusiasm, once foiled, quickly cools. There is at present citizen interest, energy and enthusiasm regarding problems of local government which, directed into intelligent channels, may work wonders. At the least, things are happening in the field of local government with greater rapidity than probably ever before. The record of the depression will not be entirely written in red ink!

Financing Governmental Services in Rural Areas

MAKE the operating unit conform to the natural economic unit and rural government can support itself

BY PAUL W. WAGER

University of North Carolina

THE pattern of rural life has undergone such profound changes in the last two decades that the units of taxation and government are badly in need of adjustment. Many units are too limited in taxable resources to provide the essential services of a modern rural civilization and many are too small in area to constitute an efficient unit of administration. It is not easy, however, to uproot established governments, or to change political boundaries, or to abolish existing offices.

SUBSIDIES ARE HARMFUL

Unable or unwilling to make these fundamental adjustments local governments have sought relief through state and federal subsidies. Granting its popularity, a subsidy is destructive both to economy of administration and democratic government. It would be better to transfer to the state those functions which are essentially a state responsibility and to adopt a rational scheme of joint support for those which serve both the state and the locality. Functions which are strictly local in character can be supported with adequacy and equity when the tax unit is made to conform with a natural economic unit. The two biggest items in the cost of rural government are the support of roads and schools. While both are traditionally local functions, changed conditions have necessitated a broader basis of support. The development in these two fields will be discussed briefly.

ROADS

A generation ago roads were a neighborhood institution; their support was a proper function of local government. The wealth of a whole county might be taxed to build a main artery but for the most part the township was the unit of road taxation and administration. In the South, where the township did not exist, counties were divided into special road districts. Virginia utilized the magisterial district as a unit of road administration. In 1928 Oregon had 850 road districts and Illinois 1400. In half a dozen states the township is still an important highway unit. This is the case in New York, where in 1930 the highway expenditures of the 932 towns amount to $29,000,000. The expenditure for maintenance was 19½ millions compared to 8 millions expended by the counties and 9 millions by the state. Nevertheless the township is rapidly being abandoned as a road unit, and there is every reason why it should be. On even the most local roads the bulk of the traffic originates outside the township. Moreover, the road mileage of a township is too limited to justify the ownership and use of modern road machinery. In this automobile age the county is none too

large to serve as the primary road district and fully two-thirds of the states have adopted this unit.

Even where the county has been adopted as the unit of road administration, it has not been left as the sole source of support. Most of the states provide aid to counties for road construction and maintenance. The basis of distribution varies widely as does the degree of state supervision. In addition to state aid for county roads, many of the states have built and are maintaining a considerable mileage of primary roads entirely at state and federal expense. Since these roads carry a large volume of interstate traffic it is logical and proper that they should be built from other than local funds.

In 1929 the sum of 645 million dollars was expended on local roads, 122 millions of which were derived from gasoline and motor vehicle taxes, 33 from other state sources, and 490 from local sources. The amount expended that year on state highways was 800 million dollars, 77 millions of which came from the federal government, 565 from gasoline and motor vehicle taxes, 113 from other state sources, and 45 from the counties.

Two states—North Carolina and Virginia—have taken all the roads into the state systems. In Virginia the county road organizations are being used temporarily as agencies of the state but in North Carolina all local road boards have been dissolved and the state organization has divided the state into twenty-five administrative districts. In addition to 9,000 miles of primary roads the state is maintaining 45,000 miles of local roads. The legislature appropriated $6,000,000 to maintain the latter mileage for the present fiscal year but not much over $5,000,000 will need to be expended, compared with $8,250,000 expended last year under county maintenance. The rural mail carriers at their recent convention passed resolutions commending the state highway commission on the excellent condition of the roads. The state highway fund is supported entirely from gasoline and motor vehicle taxes. The North Carolina system may not be the best for all states but the results in that state the first year have exceeded the expectations of the most sanguine.

SCHOOLS

In some respects the evolution in school support parallels that in road support. Education is no longer considered a purely local responsibility; indeed it is essentially a state responsibility. This does not mean that school costs should all be borne out of state funds. There are administrative and psychological reasons why the localities should continue to bear part of the cost of the local schools. The schools should remain close to the people and no community should be denied the right to tax itself to provide exceptional facilities. On the other hand, there should be reasonable equality of tax burden in meeting minimum standards.

The tiny school district which has been so characteristic of the past necessarily results in great inequalities both in tax burden and in educational facilities. The two means most used to remove or mitigate these inequalities are state aid and the enlargement of districts through consolidation. New York offers an illustration of the use of state aid as an equalizing agency. Each district which employs a single teacher is required to levy a four-mill tax on each dollar of actual valuation; the state contributes the balance necessary to provide $1500. The state also apportions an equalization quota to districts employing two or more teachers. This arrangement serves two purposes. It equalizes the tax burden and it insures the attainment of a minimum standard of instruction. It may be criticized, however, in that it tends to perpetuate

the one-room school and discourages the consolidation of small districts into larger units.

In some states state aid is used as a stimulating fund rather than as an equalizing fund. It is not designed to give tax relief but to improve the quality of education. Grants are made for school buildings and equipment, for school libraries, for pupil transportation, and other special purposes. Usually such grants have to be matched by the locality and thus, desirable as is the objective, may invite indulgencies beyond the capacity of the district to support.

Although the absolute amount of state aid has increased appreciably in recent years it has not kept pace with the increase in local expenditures, or at least it did not in the decade from 1918 to 1928. In 1918 there were 7 states in which 40 per cent or more of the public school support was derived from the state. Ten years later there were only two states in which this was true. In 1928 state revenues supplied 83 per cent of the cost of the Delaware schools. Next in rank were Alabama 41 per cent, Texas 36 per cent, Utah 35 per cent and Wyoming 33 per cent. There were 13 states in which the schools received less than 10 per cent from the state. Several states have increased the amount, and probably the proportion, of state support since 1928. Moreover, the states are relying less on the property tax than formerly, so that the net tax on property for school purposes is less than it has been.

Authorities on school administration are generally agreed that the local unit for the administration of schools should be larger than the small district found in many of the states, but they are not entirely agreed upon what the larger unit should be. Some favor the county and others what they term the "community unit." There has been a development in both directions. There are now eleven states in which the school organization approximates the county-unit plan. All except one are southern states. The eleven states are: Alabama, Louisiana, Utah, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Tennessee, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia. Several other states have passed laws enabling individual counties to establish the county as a unit. These are Montana, Nebraska, Arkansas, Oregon, Texas and Minnesota.

There have been many instances of consolidation embracing less than a whole county. In 1928 there were in Kansas 179 consolidated districts which had been formed from 522 districts, and in 1929 there were in Michigan 61 consolidated schools replacing 308 one-room schools. Iowa has 402 consolidated districts and South Dakota 94. Nevertheless, the number of small districts is still very large, 65,000 in eleven reporting states in 1930. Michigan has 6,873, Minnesota, 7,707, and Missouri 7,758. Illinois has 10,142 districts having one-room schools and Kansas 7,139.

OTHER LOCAL FUNCTIONS

In addition to roads and schools, which are by far the most costly, the functions of rural local government include policing and the administration of justice, the custody and care of prisoners, poor relief and other welfare activities, public health work, the support of public libraries, farm and home demonstration work, and various promotional enterprises. Many of these functions are of more than local benefit and are receiving a larger and larger share of state support or are being assumed in large part by the state. Several states have state police forces which relieve the sheriff of much of his police work. All states have assumed the custody of most of the dependent and delinquent classes. Several states, including New York and New Jersey, share in the support of the indigent aged. Most

states take care of felons, and North Carolina has relieved the counties of the care of all able-bodied male prisoners serving 60 days or more. Public health work and farm and home demonstration work are supported jointly by federal, state, and local governments. State aid is frequently available for county libraries.

It might be expected that the pronounced development in state aid or joint support in all these fields would have resulted in a reduction in county taxes. This does not seem to have been the case, however. There have been tax reductions this year in certain rural units but only because of taxpayers' revolts and then through a curtailment of services. County and township government has remained costly, despite the increased state aid, partly because of a legitimate expansion in health, welfare, and educational activities, partly because of ambitious road building programs, financed largely by bonds which must now be liquidated, and partly because of faulty administrative practices. There is too much overhead. The way to make a substantial reduction in administrative costs is to reduce the number of officers, even more, reduce the number of political units. The perpetuation of townships and of many small, weak counties not only results in a needless multiplicity of tax-spending agencies but tends to fill the offices with untrained and often incompetent public servants.

A NEW CONCEPT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT NEEDED

The rural population is entitled to governmental services of the kind and quality necessary to promote a rich and satisfying country life. Moreover, rural taxpayers should no longer be required to bear a disproportionate part of the cost of services which have ceased to be local in character. In the main, an outright transfer of functions is preferable to a grant-in-aid. The state should relieve the counties of those functions which are clearly of state-wide concern and furnish guidance in the administration of even local functions.

Local self-government should be encouraged but there needs to be a new concept both of what is *local* and what is *self-government*. Rural political units should be expanded to coincide with the extended radius of the countryman's business and social relationships. Furthermore, rural local government should lend itself to effective popular control. A long ballot is an obstacle to such control. A simple, unified administration in the hands of a trained personnel offers the only basis for responsible self-government. A larger unit and a shorter ballot are in the interest of economy, efficiency, and democracy.

People v. Empty Acres: A Problem in Rural Government

WHAT shall be done with regions unable to meet the usual overhead costs of local government?

BY PHILIP H. CORNICK

Institute of Public Administration

IS IT conceivable that extensive areas in the United States can be provided with all essential governmental services without the intervention of any local government whatsoever, and without resort to devices that need alarm the most ardent champions of democratic institutions? Is it possible that the abolition of local governments in certain areas may even strengthen the democratic structure as a whole, by eliminating the easily distinguishable submarginal regions where need and function, cost and benefit cannot by any legerdemain yet invented be brought into balance with one another? At least one example which warrants affirmative answers to both of these questions may be cited.

THE 45,000,000 UNDER RURAL GOVERNMENT

The 45,000,000 people living in cities of 30,000 population or more have by sheer voting strength obtained separate classification and subclassification for themselves. The 33,000,000 living in incorporated places of less than 30,000 have also established their rights of separate classification, and of variation in some degree from the rigid and inadequate provisions of the rural pattern. Except for planless classifications, provided by differences in pattern from state to state, the remaining 45,000,000, however, still remain unclassified.

There would, of course, be no need for classification within this last group if they had distributed themselves as the fathers hoped they would—if they lived throughout that part of the country not included within incorporated areas at the average rate of three families per square mile. It so happens, however, that they did not so distribute themselves. In the stable farming communities of the middle west, their density is much greater than that. In other sections of the nation, the density is an almost negligible fraction of that average. Nevertheless, regardless of density, regardless of occupation, regardless of needs, these 45,000,000 with minor exceptions here and there, are required to maintain the two or more layers of local government which the uniform pattern in vogue in their several states happens to prescribe. The first step in the reform of rural government, therefore, would seem to be a continuation of the process of classification which has brought about the emancipation of governments in what might be called the supra-agricultural areas of the country, and its extension into the infra-agricultural areas.

INFRA-AGRICULTURAL AREAS

Now what are those areas which can easily be distinguished from normal agricultural areas both in their needs for local government, and in their capacity to support such government?

First, we have the areas included in state and federal forest preserves and parks which can in the nature of things have no permanent population other than forest rangers and wardens. Second, we have the holdings of private lumber and paper companies, which except for brief periods and at long intervals have only sparse populations at best. Third, we have the large areas of denuded forest lands unsuited for farming. Fourth, we have those extensive areas in which, because of extremes and duration of heat or cold, or because of scant rainfall, only the most meagre population has been able to obtain even a precarious foothold. Fifth, we have the large and growing areas in state after state which were once prosperous and productive farming communities, but which have been pushed below the margin of profitable agriculture by the inexorable play of economic forces; and which, decade after decade, show a decline both in population and in the area of plowed land. Finally, we have those once thriving lumber towns, mining camps and oil "cities," which with the exhaustion of the natural resources for whose exploitation they came into being, have passed into history.

There is not a single one of the 48 states which does not contain areas falling in one or more of these six classes. Not even Rhode Island and Delaware are entirely free; not even those highly developed farming states on the great plains—Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska.

Altogether, it is not improbable that almost half of the total land area of the country belongs in these six classes which, for lack of a better term, we have called infra-agricultural. Throughout the greater part of the areas so classified, the forms of local government dictated by the normal patterns have become in some cases ineffective, in other cases superfluous, in all cases costly, instruments for meeting either state or local needs.

On the other hand, because such units of local government as had been erected in those areas were frequently woven into the state-wide machinery of election and representation; because workers in the field of rural government either overlooked the existence of these units or confused their problems with those of the local governments in the normal agricultural areas; and because public office became in a decadent area, one of the few dependable means of livelihood for those capable of maintaining themselves in power, these outworn governments have exhibited a capacity for survival out of all proportion to their social utility.

THE MAINE EXAMPLE

Now, what, if anything, can and should be done about it? The experience of the state of Maine with her four hundred and odd unorganized townships indicates not only what can be done but what the advantages are of doing it. Those townships, containing more than nine and a half million acres —almost half the area of the state—are distributed through eight counties. The county in Maine, however, maintains courts, a sheriff, a jail, a register of deeds, and little else. The provision of schools and highways, and the assessment and collection of taxes, fall beyond the scope of its duties and powers.

Those are functions of the towns, if, as, and when organized. The general law provides means for the organization of a full-fledged town government in every township, with complete powers of local self-government including the rights and duties to assess property for taxation, to levy and collect taxes for its own purposes, to collect taxes levied for state and county purposes, and to incur indebtedness. It provides, further, for the creation of temporary or transitional local governments, called plantations. These are of two types: one with practically all the powers and duties of a town except the right to incur indebted-

ness; the other with more limited powers to levy and collect taxes for local purposes, chiefly schools, but without the duty of collecting taxes levied either for state or county purposes.

As the state grew, township after township was equipped with its full complement of local governmental machinery. Finally, however, the northward march of population began to lag. The lure of the west, combined with the rigors of the long, hard winters of the north woods, brought the establishment of new town governments to an end. Not even the existence of 1000 to 1250 acres of school lands in each township, and of accumulated income held in trust in the state treasury, could induce the requisite number of people to establish permanent residences in the townships of that region. The federal census indicates that many of these townships have had no population whatsoever in the last three census periods; that others have had as many as 50 or fewer inhabitants at only one or two of those three census periods; that only a few of them have, or have had within thirty years, as many as 200 inhabitants on the enumeration dates. With less than that number a township cannot be organized even into a first class plantation, much less a town.

STATE ADMINISTERS UNORGANIZED TOWNS

Since certain governmental services were nevertheless essential even in the totally unpopulated areas, and since it would have been contrary to the New England tradition to have the county provide them, it became necessary for the state to assume those functions. Today the state prepares directly an assessment roll of all taxable property in the unorganized area; the counties certify to state officials the taxes for county purposes which they have levied against the taxable properties in the unorganized towns, on the basis of the valuations placed on them by the state officials; the state treasurer collects all state, county and district taxes levied against the properties. The state highway department builds such highways as may be needed for through traffic. The lumber companies and the land owners build and maintain, individually or in coöperation with one another, such temporary or permanent logging roads or trails as they may deem necessary. In some instances the state forestry, and fish and game, departments also coöperate with the lumbermen when the trails are of such a nature as to facilitate the discharge of their own duties.

The state department of education is directly responsible for schooling in the unorganized towns. For some isolated families with only one or two children, it meets the problem by contributing to the costs of transporting and boarding the children at available schools elsewhere. In other cases, it pays the salary of a teacher for a one-family school, the family contributing board and lodging for the teacher and providing a school room in the building occupied by the family. Where several families are clustered about some local nucleus, the state supplies both building and the teacher. In such cases the department of education collects through its agent a poll tax of three dollars from every male adult resident in the township. Official reports indicate that, in 1928, 507 children were provided with an average of 171 days of schooling at a cost to the state of about $40,000. These costs were chargeable directly to the funds provided by the state for the support of education which are derived in part from a state tax levied on all taxable property in the state, including that in the unorganized townships. Such health and welfare work as the unorganized territory needs is provided effectively and directly by the state departments concerned. The state police, the state fire wardens, and the state

fish and game wardens provide such policing as is necessary. So much for the usual functions of local government in rural areas which, in the unorganized townships of Maine, are provided directly by the state.

In addition, there are certain specialized services necessary in a forest area which are also as a rule administered elsewhere by local units, with or without state aid and supervision. Chief among these are the control of forest fires and insect pests. These are provided in the unorganized townships in the eight northern counties (as well as in a few adjoining organized towns which have elected to become part of the district) by the Maine Forestry District—an administrative district created by statute at the request of the land owners affected; and are supported by a special tax levied and collected by the state on all properties within it. The state forest commissioner is by statute also the head of this district.

IMPRESSIVE ECONOMIES EFFECTED

Now what does all this cost?

The tax for the support of the state government for 1932 amounts to 7 mills, including three and a third mills for the state school fund, and three other levies of a mill each for war bond retirement, state highways, and the state university. The tax rates for the counties vary, but rarely exceed two mills. In addition, there is the tax for the forestry district, which is fixed by statute at two and a quarter mills; but the levy at this rate has in the past been partially offset by rebates out of the surplus accumulated in the district fund. A considerable surplus is maintained at all times to provide for bad fire years, but when that surplus grows beyond the sum dictated by prudence, rebates may be, and have been, ordered.

In other words, for eleven and a quarter mills on an assessed valuation admittedly below full value, less possible rebates, the property owners and residents in the unorganized townships receive the full benefits not only of state and county government, but also of every essential service which is administered in other areas by local units. Moreover, there is every reason to believe the revenue from these townships meets the full cost of the service rendered them. The average rates of taxation among the organized towns in the same counties were reported by the state board of assessors to have ranged in 1928 between 43 mills in the lowest county and 56 in the highest. Some of the organized towns undoubtedly needed and got more intensive services than those required in the more sparsely populated unorganized townships in the same region. Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that a considerable part of the difference between 11 and 56 mills represents the overhead involved in maintaining a local political organization which has subordinated ends to means. Be that as it may, Maine towns have been known to "disorganize" voluntarily, and to take advantage of the lower costs of state administered local services.

The existing provisions for the exercise of the suffrage by citizens resident in unorganized territory constitute the weak link in the system which has grown up in Maine. Because the town is still the basic electoral unit, citizens in unorganized territory can register for state, county, and national elections only in organized towns. The section of the law authorizing such registration, although recently amended, antedates many of the statutes under which the state now provides services directly in the unorganized territory, and would seem to be in conflict with some of their provisions. Its survival in its present form is plainly due to an oversight which could easily be corrected. When that shall have been done, the Maine plan will be not only effective and economical, but also democratic.

"As goes Maine, so goes the Union."

Rural Areas for Rural Government

COMBINE villages and contiguous open-country areas in one rural municipality for preserving home rule for agricultural areas

BY THEODORE B. MANNY

U. S. Department of Agriculture

SPEAKING generally, the average farm family is now very much less dependent upon local geographic groupings than was formerly true. Good roads and automotive equipment have freed farmers from more or less sole dependence upon a single trade or market center or upon their immediate neighbors. With the consolidation of small school districts and the abandonment of many open-country churches, many open-country neighborhood or primary groups seem to be passing entirely out of the picture, at least in so far as social relationships are concerned. In some instances where such neighborhoods have coincided approximately with units of local government, a semblance of social grouping and group activity may remain. Personally, I am of the conviction that, as further improvements in transportation and communication continue to reduce the handicaps of distance, hills and streams, we may expect to see fewer, larger, and less personal grouping—arrangements in most rural areas.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

In suggesting what I feel is a reasonable and effective solution to the complicated problem of overlapping, conflicting, and uneconomic rural areas as applied to government, I want to state briefly the premises upon which these ideas are based.

Local self-government is considered by many a right and not a privilege but the contrary is more nearly correct. As a privilege, it should not be extended to all areas indiscriminately. The privilege should be available only to areas whose civic consciousness is quite active, whose economic and social interests are well unified, and whose economic resources are sufficient to finance effective local self-government without excessive or confiscatory taxation.

In the second place, each state (and possibly with some equalization as between financially stronger and weaker states through the federal government) should be directly responsible for the performing or supervising of certain generally accepted governmental functions in a minimum way throughout all parts of the state regardless of local financial resources to pay for them. At present this should apply to at least the following: the administration of justice; the maintenance of the peace; the providing of a 9-month, 10-grade school system; a system of arterial highways; the care of the insane and feeble-minded, and the incarceration of criminals for sentences of more than 90 days except where purely local ordinances, not state laws, are violated. Perhaps other functions should be added to the list.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Excerpts from an address delivered before the section on rural government of the American Political Science Association, Washington, December 28, 1931.

However, such functions and services as are performed by the state should be financed through a state-administered tax system devised to secure uniformity and fairness throughout the area and administered by state-appointed officials under a carefully worked out civil service system.

Third, such units of local self-government as are provided, both urban and rural, should be allowed to administer as much of the above state-determined policies within their areas as possible, with adequate state supervision under pain of stoppage of financial assistance from the state for failures to carry on as intended. Some of the afore-mentioned functions, however, would remain in the hands of the state for direct administration. The road system, and the care of the insane and feeble-minded are examples of such functions. The units of local government would be given large powers of self-government in the providing of municipal services of all kinds though with some restriction upon bonding and taxing. They might, if they so desired, transcend the minima provided under state administration, as for example, the fields of education and public health.

Finally, governmental services and facilities for farm people as well as many economic and social agencies and institutions of non-governmental character, can be provided more effectively, efficiently, and under modern means of transportation and communication with little or no handicap to the farmers by centering most of these in the farmers' market towns. The other alternative of maintaining separate agencies for the trade centers, small villages and open-country has been tried and found expensive and generally insufficient. Furthermore, the separate incorporation of hamlets, villages, and larger farmers' trade centers has done much to antagonize farmers and townspeople as well as causing high-cost governmental services to both groups.

THE PLAN OUTLINED

Keeping the above premises in mind, what kinds of unit areas for local government are involved? I can but outline these in a very few words. The filling in of the details is much less fundamental than an understanding of basic concepts.

First, as regards counties, I believe that these should be given over entirely to the administration of state-determined policies and that all powers of local self-government should reside entirely in various classes of incorporated places. Fewer and larger counties for these purposes would eventuate. Existing county buildings could be used to hold court at several points within the larger administrative counties if so desired, and some of the administrative work might be decentralized in these offices but under the control of the county administrators for the various fields. In other instances, the county buildings would become the offices of the municipal government.

Next, there should be several classes of urban incorporated places either under the optional or home rule plans of incorporation. These various plans will take care of all urban communities whose major interests are so predominantly non-agricultural as to make a consolidated town and open-country unit undesirable. The largest of these centers, such as cities with 250,000 or more in population, might also be separate administrative counties under this plan while the smaller urban places would remain with open-country and village areas in making up the new administrative counties.

Then there would be another class of incorporated places, including the typical farmers' trade centers and smaller hamlets, together with such contiguous open-country areas as desired

to secure the advantages of municipal incorporation. In the absence of a better term, I have called this unit the rural municipality. Two or more trade towns and the farm lands lying between and around them might join forces as a single municipality if they desired. Or, in situations where the farmers did not want to assume the responsibilities and receive the benefits of such incorporation, the trade centers could incorporate much as at present. I cannot go into the details of organization, powers, and functioning of these new units. I realize fully that serious problems of readjustment are involved. Yet, I feel confident that such matters can be handled satisfactorily and at the same time meet the most serious objections to our present rural government situation.

Local self-government in rural areas is now at a crossroads. One way out leads to complete concentration of local rural government in very large counties, so large that any economic or social sense of oneness in local governmental affairs will not be possible among the farm people who compose it. The other way leads in the direction of state administration for rural areas whose residents do not have a sufficiently developed sense of civic responsibility and unity to make for successful local self-government, and towards a flexible, well-supervised form of village and open-country consolidation under incorporated rural municipalities available to those areas desiring to provide more than the state-determined minima and willing to assume the responsibilities essential in a vitalized and efficient unit of local self-government.

My suggestions are admittedly radical and to become effective demand far-reaching changes in state constitutions and statute laws. The plan can be put into effect gradually. It might be tried out here and there, more or less experimentally at first. However, with my own contacts with farm people as a basis, I feel safe in saying that their trends of thinking at present are more favorable to fundamental changes in local government than has ever been true heretofore. Educators, political scientists, economists, sociologists, and farmer leaders now have about the best opportunity they are likely to have for a long time to come to formulate and secure the acceptance of some form of governmental reorganization that will meet the demands of the present day more completely and efficiently than can most of the antiquated and inadequate machinery under which rural areas now struggle.

The County's Place In Large Urban Areas

THE county is the most available unit on which to build a government for a metropolitan area

BY R. C. ATKINSON

The Ohio Institute

WHAT is to be the place of the county in the local governmental system of the large urban area? This question has acquired added significance due to two important developments. The first is the increasing inability of large cities to annex their suburbs, which has resulted in the growth of elaborate colonies of separate political subdivisions without a central government to grapple with basic urban problems. The second is the great expansion of county activities and expenditures in recent years, which has tended to emphasize the overlapping of county and municipal governments and to increase the problems to which the dual system of local government gives rise. The need of integration and more unified financial planning and control over the development of local governmental services has become too obvious to require explanation.

NO SINGLE ANSWER POSSIBLE

Widely different answers have been offered to the question as to the proper place of the county in the government of urban areas. Some have proposed the separation of the city from the county, making it a so-called "free city" with both municipal and county powers. Others have suggested the abolition of the county and the creation of a new regional unit absorbing part of the functions of counties and municipalities in the urban region. Still a third group would reorganize county government and expand its scope to include at least part of the major services heretofore rendered by cities.

An examination of individual cases, however, indicates that no single answer can possibly provide the solution of the problem in all instances. There is the widest variation in the character of the local situation in different places. At one extreme is the county that is but a segment of a vast metropolitan region, such as the counties of Northern New Jersey, or is mainly part of such a region, as the counties in Greater Boston; and at the other extreme is the county which contains a single large city whose growth has substantially kept pace with the spread of urban population.

The situation is well illustrated by the large counties of Ohio. Cuyahoga County is almost entirely urban, embracing practically all of Greater Cleveland, which consists of some 55 separate cities and villages. On the other hand, Hamilton County, containing Cincinnati and a considerable group of suburbs as well as some rural territory, forms but part of the Cincinnati metropolitan district, substantial sections of which lie in two Kentucky counties. Franklin County includes a large farming area and several rural villages in addition to the city of Columbus and its suburbs. Montgomery County presents a some-

what similar picture except that the suburban area about Dayton is comparatively small. A much more complicated situation exists in Stark County, however. In addition to Canton, a city of 105,000, this county includes two entirely separate cities of about 25,000 that are not a part of Greater Canton. Obviously, any plan for the integration of urban government in Ohio must possess extreme flexibility, if indeed any one proposal can be formulated which will meet the needs of all the large urban communities of the state.

CENTERS OF LESS THAN 300,000 POPULATION

While conditions differ somewhat as between the large metropolitan district and the center of from 100,000 to 300,000 population, the differences appear for the most part to be matters of degree rather than of kind. The smaller cities are less likely to be hedged about by unannexable suburbs, and the urban territory is less apt to overflow into adjoining counties. At the same time the rural portion of the county is usually much larger and relatively more important in such cases, and the county is more likely to contain outlying municipalities not belonging to the main urban community.

However, urban areas of this general size present examples of conditions substantially similar to those found in larger centers. To illustrate further from the Ohio situation, both Akron and Youngstown have suburban problems quite as intricate as those of some cities of considerably greater size. In the case of Akron, there are two suburbs of over 20,000 population which have developed from old detached communities and possess a strong separatist spirit. In the case of Youngstown, the urban region not only embraces various cities and villages adjoining the central city, but may fairly be said to include at least one important manufacturing city in a neighboring county.

In general, it is probably fair to conclude that in urban areas in the 100,000 to 300,000 population group the problem of securing a unified administration of municipal services is much less pressing; that the county is apt to include a sufficiently great part of the area to warrant its use as the agency for the handling of the services most needing unified control; and that if the county were to take over some municipal functions, it would be necessary to create an urban district for the purpose of financing the conduct of certain of them, such as sewage disposal and water supply, which are required only by the urban area. A thorough-going reorganization of local government in such counties might well result in the creation of an urban district, consisting of the central city and the adjacent allotted territory, and a rural district, with some differences in the services administered by the county in each and corresponding differences in tax levies. Thus, the county might serve as the agency to construct and maintain the sewerage system of the urban area and also to build and repair local roads in the rural district, separate taxes being levied within the respective areas for these purposes.

CITY-COUNTY SEPARATION

In some respects a complete separation of the city from the county, the functions of the county being absorbed by the city government within the city limits, would appear to offer the simplest solution of the problem of city-county relations. It would eliminate the present dualism in so far as the city area is concerned and, if properly worked out, would provide a system of local government more understandable to the local electorate and more amenable to popular control. It also would permit unified planning and budgeting of local governmental activities. From the standpoint of administration, it would make possible the elimination of some dupli-

cation of effort and a reduction in friction among the various agencies of local government.

However, this simplicity is not as great as it may at first seem. If the separation were carried out without the annexation to the city of the suburbs and an extensive undeveloped area—which is exactly the thing our large cities have been unable to accomplish in recent years—such separation would create a situation more complicated and difficult to deal with than that which it replaced. It would leave the city surrounded by a host of separate suburbs located in a different county. Other than the state, there would be no governmental unit geographically large enough to deal with problems common to the entire urban area. The city would be left without a voice in the planning and development of its environs and with little opportunity of securing such a voice. It need hardly be stated that such matters as the construction of an adequate thoroughfare system, the provision of efficient health service, the development of parks and recreation areas, the regulation of commercial amusement places, and the control of vice and crime in both allotted and unallotted areas adjacent to the city are of vital concern to its people. Moreover, the county would be seriously handicapped by the loss of the city tax valuation in attempting to finance improvements and services largely necessitated by the proximity of the city. Without being able to tap the resources of the central city, the surrounding territory would be faced by large highway expenditures, difficult police problems, heavy poor relief demands, and other burdens for which the city is chiefly responsible. At the same time the remnant county would be left a political doughnut without its natural governmental center, and would perhaps be required to provide new buildings for its use, the logical location of which would very likely be in the city.

The mere separation of the city from the county is not apt to afford a satisfactory solution of the governmental problem of the large urban area. It ignores the desirability of a governmental unit bigger than the existing city and including the suburban ring about it. and it overlooks the necessity of providing for further increases in population and the tendency of the automobile and improved road to diffuse urban population over an even broader area. It also fails to take into account the interrelation of the city and the rural territory adjacent to it. From the standpoint of future development the existence of a considerable rural fringe within an urban county may be a very real advantage.

REPLACEMENT OF COUNTY BY REGIONAL UNIT

The recent New Jersey proposal to abolish the county and create a new regional unit absorbing at least part of its powers and serving as the agency for handling those municipal services that need unified administration is particularly appropriate in those cases where the urban area includes large portions of several counties. If the slate could be wiped clean of existing political boundaries, such a plan might offer an ideal solution of the problem. Eventually, necessity may compel the creation of such units in a number of urban areas as it has brought about the metropolitan district in the case of Greater Boston. However, it is difficult to alter even absurdly illogical boundaries, and it is rather too much to hope that an old established governmental institution such as the county can be readily eliminated no matter how good a case may be made for the change. Moreover, such a reorganization would undoubtedly involve many intricate problems of adjustment, such as the disposition of

county remainders not belonging to the urban region.

In most cases it seems more likely that the county itself may be utilized as the regional agency of the urban area, at least for some time to come, than that it will be replaced by a totally new unit. Interestingly enough, such a possibility is considered as an alternative in the New Jersey study, though much less appropriate in Northern New Jersey than in most places. While the county is not as satisfactory a regional unit as could readily be blocked out, it does in many instances include the whole urban area and in most cases it contains all but relatively small parts of that area. In some of the most conspicuous exceptions, the establishment of an inclusive regional unit is made extremely remote by the fact that the major part of the region outside the principal county lies within a different state, as in the cases of Chicago, Kansas City, and Cincinnati, or in the case of Detroit, in another county.

Apart from the degree to which the county corresponds to or includes the urban area, there is the fact that the county is a going concern. As a rule, it is easier to build on existing institutions or to modify them than to destroy them and erect a new governmental structure. Though the county is often referred to as an artificial geographical unit, the difficulty of bringing about county consolidation and of eliminating the township bears evidence to the degree to which such so-called artificial units have become embedded in custom and overgrown with vested interests tenacious of their existence.

REORGANIZATION OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES

With the movement for the reorganization of county government rapidly gaining momentum, the question naturally arises as to what extent the county can be employed in meeting the regional government problem. Whatever theoretical case can be made for out-and-out city-county consolidation, experience indicates that the complete absorption of local services by the county is not as yet a practical proposal in most places. It naturally encounters much the same obstacles as the effort to unify the government of the urban area by annexation, namely, the desire of suburbs to preserve their identity, either as a matter of local pride or because of advantages in tax rates or standards of public service. Nor would complete city-county consolidation be appropriate in some cases, even though obtainable.

Whether or not city-county consolidation or a federal plan of local government is considered the ultimate goal, important progress can be made toward the integration of local government in the urban area by extending the powers of the county into the municipal field. It is this plan which is proposed by the county home rule amendment now under consideration in Ohio. In addition to authorizing counties to frame charters determining their form of organization, the amendment permits the charter to vest in the county, either exclusively or concurrently, any powers conferred on cities and villages. To safeguard the interests of the suburbs and the rural fringe, however, it provides that a charter conferring municipal powers on the county must not only receive a favorable majority in the entire county but also in the principal city, in the area outside such city, and in each of a majority of the municipalities and townships.

Under the proposed amendment a wide variety of readjustments would be permitted. A county might reorganize the machinery of county government and leave existing local units untouched, or it might even go so far as to consolidate city and county government entirely if sentiment were strongly in favor

of the present county functions there is of such a plan. Between these two extremes it could effect the transfer to the county of any individual municipal service. Thus, the matters of water supply and sewage disposal could be turned over to the county and a county police department could be created either replacing or supplementing existing police units. The charter might also provide for the establishment of taxing or administrative districts. Under this authority it might set up an urban district consisting of the central city, its incorporated suburbs and the unincorporated, allotted territory adjacent to it, a rural district for the rural portion of the county, and, if needed, special districts for outlying municipalities not parts of the main urban area. It might also provide for different rates of county taxation in these districts corresponding generally to differences in the services maintained by the county in its various parts. If, for example, sewer and water systems and the matter of garbage disposal were turned over to the county, the charter could restrict these services and the taxes for their support to the urban district or to special districts corresponding to the areas served.

It is frankly recognized that probably no one scheme of city-county readjustment can be devised which will fit the local needs, let alone enlist popular support, in all the large urban counties of the state. However, if Greater Cleveland desires a federal plan of government, it can secure it under the amendment; if Lucas County (Toledo) wishes city-county consolidation, that is possible; and if Hamilton County (Cincinnati) prefers to consolidate police, health, and welfare services and leave other functions as they are, it can do so.

PROGRESS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

It is not claimed by the proponents of the amendment that it offers an ideal solution of the regional government problem. Assuming that Greater Cleveland should adopt a charter transferring to the county the group of services most needing unified control, no one would assert that the existing subdivisions would provide a reasonable division of the territory into boroughs for the handling of other functions. Nevertheless, the unification of the first group of activities would constitute an immense advance. As a matter of fact even that will no doubt have to be accomplished by stages as the plan of administration by the county demonstrates its value and the county wins the confidence of the electorate. In a word, the process will probably have to be evolutionary, and under existing conditions there is little likelihood that any other method can be applied with success in most great urban centers.

In conclusion the following considerations are offered: (1) that as a rule the county is the only available local unit geographically able to deal with problems of the large urban region or at least of the major portion of it; (2) that in most cases the use of the county as the regional unit is likely to be more feasible than the abolition of the county and the creation of a totally new local governmental arrangement; (3) that whatever plan is proposed in a state having numerous large cities, it must possess a high degree of flexibility if it is to be applicable to all cases; and (4) that the integration of the local governmental system of large urban areas will almost inevitably be a slow and difficult task which will require an evolutionary process for its accomplishment.

County Government and State Centralization

THE inexorable trend to state centralization must be recognized, believes the author, if proposals, such as the county manager plan, are to succeed

BY KIRK H. PORTER *State University of Iowa*

One of the most promising methods of improving county government lies in tying up the various county activities with those departments of state administration which deal with the same problems. And it is to be observed in this connection that in general we got better highways when we set up state highway commissions and gave them some power. We are getting better rural schools as we strengthen our state departments of education. Our county poor farms improve materially when the state comes in and carries off to state institutions the most difficult of the inmates—the insane, the feeble-minded, the epileptic, the dope-addicts, and the orphans. Effective local public health service cannot be expected in the rural areas without the leadership of a well-organized state department of health. And if we ever get out of the dreadful morass into which we have fallen with our general property tax, it will be due largely to the energetic efforts of state tax commissions in straightening out our property assessments. Effective rural policing is everywhere waiting for the creation of well-organized state police forces; and many careful students of the process of administering justice are convinced that sooner or later our local prosecutors must become part of their respective state departments of justice.

TIME TO FIND A MIDDLE GROUND

The simple fact that there is a distinct trend in the direction of state centralization would seem to be too obvious to need proof or comment. But what does need commenting upon is the desirability of this movement. Should it be encouraged and promoted?

It is rather unfortunate that so many of the advocates, both pro and con, seem to think it necessary to take extreme positions on the matter, and profess to see no good whatever in the opposing program. Thus, those who have great faith in the county manager scheme of government wax eloquent about home rule, and execrate anything that can be branded as "centralization," all the while greatly deploring the tendency to bring about "apoplexy at the head, and paralysis at the extremities." On the other hand, advocates of the dreaded "centralization" never weary of parading the weaknesses of local self-government.

It is time we found a middle ground. I have indicated my own belief that much good has come and will continue to come from state centralization; but, on the other hand, I would be among the first to argue against over-doing it. The problem is to find a satisfactory middle ground.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE

In connection with nearly every one of the present county functions there is

some important role for a state administrative agency to play. State highway commissions are able to render invaluable aid to counties in the matter of highway building. Let county boards of supervisors or commissioners employ highway engineers, in those states where that is not already being done; and let the engineer cultivate a very intimate relationship with the state highway commission. The county engineer does not need to be literally a subordinate of the state commission. But the plans which he devises for his local area at the behest of county supervisors, the specifications which he sets up, the contracts which he proposes to let, the plans for bridges which he intends to build, the program for financing the highway projects which he outlines, could very properly be laid before a state office for advice and criticism, and perhaps should be subject to a veto.

The day ought soon to be gone when a committee of unskilled farmers and local politicians can let contracts for bridges and for materials which mean nothing short of robbery from the public's point of view.

The introduction of a county manager or some other scheme of toning up local government might help to remedy some of these abuses; but the best way to deal with the matter is to get highway building on a professional basis—into the hands of a county engineer. And then, by all means, let him be possessed of some sense of responsibility to a state commission, for in that office he will find men of professional standing equal to or greater than his own, and whose opinions and advice he can respect. This would not necessitate destroying every vestige of local autonomy. Let the county boards employ their own engineer. Let them initiate projects, let them negotiate the contracts with the help of the engineer, whom they have employed. Only finally let there be effective control with the state commission, with a view of getting professional opinion and advice, for in that office there should be the best professional talent that could be found. The most important highways might properly be delivered over to the state commission; but there is no need to go to the extreme lengths that North Carolina has gone. That experiment is viewed with some dismay even by the advocates of moderate centralization.

The time should come, and come soon, when the directors of tiny rural school districts can no longer hold within their hands the destinies of public education. Highly decentralized purchasing which they do must be extremely uneconomical; they select and introduce school books for political reasons, and for reasons of economy, without regard to modern standards; they rebel at minimum teacher wage laws, and they resent certification requirements. At the other extreme, we find over-ambitious rural directors acting for "consolidated" districts, erecting school buildings that rival the finest that can be found in cities, bonds having been voted, perhaps, by enthusiastic tenant farmers. The remedy for these diverse abuses lies in some measure of centralization. Let there be a county school board to displace the petty district boards. Let there be a county superintendent who has some real authority. And let him be in very intimate contact with the state department—where a function can be exercised quite comparable to that suggested for state highway commissions. In this lies great promise of improvement. Of course, it means breaking down the pettiest local autonomy; but it does not necessarily mean wholesale, sweeping, state centralization.

Everywhere states already have relieved the counties enormously by providing state institutions for the care of specialized types of defectives and dependents. No one doubts that this

should continue. But there may be much more for the state to do. The typical poor farm is a most uneconomical institution. There are at least two possible ways of dealing with the situation. One way is for groups of counties to unite for the purpose of maintaining a poor farm, and a jail too, for that matter, or else state district poor farms and jails may be set up. Of the two, it would seem the latter device is the better. It is very difficult to effect a satisfactory agreement among a number of counties, although in some cases it has been done.

COUNTY CONSOLIDATION IMPRACTICABLE

As a solution for this, and many other problems, some reformers are advocating county consolidation. But the day for that is certainly in the very far distant future. It would involve political disruptions little short of revolutionary. It is most impracticable.

Public health agencies in the rural areas have always languished. There is scarcely a ray of hope for them except as they are stimulated, guided and helped by a state department of health. The highly paid scientist is particularly useful in this field. Local areas, outside of metropolitan centers, cannot and should not try to engage in this work on any comprehensive scale, except with the aid and guidance of the state. From any point of view, local autonomy in matters of public health has little to recommend it; and centralization is, perhaps, least to be feared in this field.

In many communities there is very stubborn resistance to centralization in connection with the general property tax. Uusually this objection reflects either ignorance, or ulterior purpose—a desire to keep assessments unfairly low. No doubt there are some people who honestly believe that assessments should be made by independent, popularly elected township or small district assessors. Nevertheless, every consideration of economy, equity, fairness, and efficiency argues for an increasing measure of centralization. Some students of the problem would go no further than to centralize this function in the office of a county assessor, either popularly elected or appointed by the county board. That is all to the good. But so long as a large portion of state revenue is derived from a general property tax, the logic of the argument for state control of the assessment process is irresistible. Sooner or later, the public will come to realize this and the dread of centralization will fade away.

JUSTICE

The woeful inadequacy of the county sheriff's office in this day of widespread crime is a subject of complaint on every hand. The office should be strengthened in every way; but the real remedy lies, of course, in the hands of state police. Their coming is inevitable. It is only a matter of getting an adequate highway system, and of overcoming the apprehensions of organized labor, until every state in the Union will have a well-organized state police department. Many of the criticisms levelled at state police by labor leaders are no doubt well founded. But that should only lead to taking steps for the purpose of eliminating these abuses; it should not lead to abandoning the idea of state police.

What is to become of the sheriff and the coroner when all this comes to pass is, of course, a fair query. The answer would seem to be to eliminate the coroner altogether, and ultimately to let the sheriff retire to the humdrum routine of an exalted court bailiff—a role which many of them are all too ready to assume as it is, even though we are still depending upon them to suppress crime and to function as detectives. They will never be able to do it effectively—even with county managers to manage

them. We must come to state centralization in this field.

One is tempted glibly to recommend that local prosecutors become mere subordinates of the state attorney general. Perhaps that is too big a dose of centralization to be taken just at present; but certainly the drift is in that direction. The combination of tremendous pressures that bear down upon the elected county prosecutor, are all calculated to induce him to neglect his duty. They are nothing short of appalling. The county board, with a grudging eye on the costs of prosecution, is forever holding him in check and making him hesitate to launch expensive trials. A desire to make an impressive record of convictions induces him to compromise with criminals—to induce them to plead guilty to lesser offenses than those of which they are really guilty. He is tempted to hide behind a grand jury, which can be induced to find no true bill in cases that promise to be difficult of conviction. Leading men of the community not only escape jury service whenever they can, but shamelessly desert him and doublecross him as witnesses.

In spite of the well-known evils of bureaucracy and the vicious patronage that might easily develop with state centralization, there is excellent reason to believe that the office of local prosecutor would be toned up very considerably if he were tied to the attorney general of the state.

A MODERATE DEGREE OF CENTRALIZATION

This article has been intended to advocate a very moderate degree of centralization. Everywhere the drift already is in that direction; and, for the most part, wherever it has occurred, good results have followed. Centralization is thus a general plan for improving local government and it has the distinct advantage of not involving sudden and radical change. It can come about slowly. It can come with respect to one service without affecting the others; there need be no startling overturn of many precious, deep-rooted institutions. This is in contrast with such radical proposals as that for county consolidation, or for marking out so-called natural districts. Gradual centralization would not interfere with the short ballot movement, which certainly ought to be encouraged, and it would not interfere with setting up a distinctly *limited* so-called county manager.

Objection to a full-fledged or genuine county manager lies in the fact that he would stand between the professional officer such as the county engineer, the health official, or the school superintendent, on the one hand, and the respective state departments with which they ought to be associated, on the other. No manager should have authoritative control over these professional local officers. They should be tied up to state departments. But if the county manager is strictly limited, so that he becomes chiefly a "staff" officer, and not a chief executive, there is much to be said for creating the office. The agitation for a *chief executive* for the county is based upon fundamentally wrong assumptions. That is one reason why it makes so little headway.

Finally, it may be said that it is only through some scheme of moderate centralization that we will ever be able to equalize tax burdens—a problem that is of very great importance. The costs of government service such as charities and highway construction, for instance, bear no constant ratio to population, area, or assessed values. The only way to adjust unequal burdens when they exist is through the state. A moderate degree of centralization obviously would greatly facilitate these needed adjustments.

North Carolina Centralizes

"The county in North Carolina will gradually fade from the picture"

BY PAUL V. BETTERS

American Municipal Association

The primary purpose of the present article is to present information with regard to the manner in which the state of North Carolina has gone about its work in organizing and administering the provisions of the revolutionary county government statutes passed in 1931. It is unnecessary at this time to describe in detail the features of the recent county government statutes since previous issues of the Review have already considered these developments.[1] The emphasis for the present, therefore, will be devoted to what has been experienced on the administrative side.

In considering these experiences it may be well to make certain preliminary statements. The first of these is that, in the final analysis, the real reason for North Carolina's action in transferring local functions to the state government is a fiscal one. When the county government laws were being considered by the general assembly the problem discussed was purely the tax problem.

Secondly, the state has perhaps given closer study to the problems of local rural government, especially in their financial aspects, than any other commonwealth, and the action taken represented some five years study of the whole problem.

THE 1931 LEGISLATION

It will be recalled that the 1931 general assembly, largely as a result of Governor O. Max Gardner's leadership, provided for the passage of three remarkable pieces of legislation all of which, in one way or another, reflected the ambition to lower general property taxes. That these measures reduced such taxes approximately $12,000,000 accounts in great measure for the almost unanimous public support (including that of the local county officials themselves) of these measures.

The State Road Law provided chiefly for five things: First, the transfer of the maintenance and support of all county roads to the state, the abolition of all county and township road boards, and no tax levy by the counties for road maintenance or construction. Second, the maintenance of county roads from the gasoline tax, which was increased from five cents per gallon to six cents, and an appropriation of $6,000,000 per year made for county roads. Third, the designation of the boards of county commissioners as liaison units between local communities and the state highway commission and the appointment of a state director of local roads to deal with local

[1] Readers are referred to an article on "North Carolina's New Plan for Controlling Fiscal Affairs" which appeared in the June, 1931, issue, and an article entitled "State Centralization in North Carolina" which appeared in the September, 1931, issue. Readers are also referred to an article by Governor O. Max Gardner of North Carolina which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* for January 2, 1932.

communities. Fourth, the transfer of all county prisoners and chain gang camps from the counties to the state, and the employment of county prisoners on roads and highways, thus ridding the state of its spotted chain gang systems, relieving the counties of a burdensome and annually mounting expenditure and permitting better treatment of prisoners. Fifth, the reorganization of the state highway commission with a chairman and six members representing the state at large instead of a chairman and nine district commissioners each with large independent powers in his own district.

The Educational Act, under which the state government was made responsible for the constitutional six months' school term, grew out of a serious financial situation. Rising costs of education, coupled with the inability to collect local taxes, had placed some counties on a script basis. A number of teachers in the public schools had not been paid in full for their services in the previous year. In spite of a twenty-four year effort to equalize the county tax rates for the support of the six months' school term by means of an equalization fund, there was still a wide range of tax rates among the several counties. Out of this general condition was born the principle of complete state financial support for the constitutional six months' school term.

The school legislation as passed provided for the underwriting, on the basis of state standards of cost, of the operation of the constitutional term in every district. And it provided further that this state support was to be derived as far as possible from sources of revenue other than taxes on land. Naturally state support of schools from sources other than taxes on land made it mandatory that limitations be imposed on school expenditures. It may be well to point out at this stage that the general assembly was able to effect reductions in school expenditures in many places.

The legislation did not result in complete substitution of state control over local control and initiative. While the legislature had no pattern before it when it framed the administrative machinery necessary to carry out the provisions of the law, it succeeded in many respects in retaining local sovereignty. Nevertheless adoption of the new policy represents a fundamental change in the concept of education as a governmental function.

CONTROL OF LOCAL CREDIT

Finally, the Local Government Act provided for drastic control over the incurring of debt by local units, vested in the state government supervision over the investment of sinking funds of local units, and applied budgetary, accounting and tax collection control over county and other local finances. The act expanded in large degree upon the county government finance laws of 1927 and 1929.

As a matter of fact, since passage of the earlier county government laws, the state had been leading up to some form of control over the use of credit by local units. What hastened the action was the magnitude of the tax burden and of the public debt. The danger point had been approached and with the default of about thirty local units the general assembly lost no time in formulating a drastic piece of legislation. Certainly no student of government would advocate such procedure in other states without thoroughly studying the situation since it comprehends a complete change in our democratic structure with regard to the rights of local officials to govern their communities. What is singularly interesting is the fact that little or no opposition was registered to state control of the above character.[2]

[2] For a complete analysis of North Carolina's action, including the historical backgrounds, the reader is referred to *State Centralization in North Carolina,* The Brookings Institution, 1932. 260 pp. An appendix in this volume carries all of the major statutes.

HIGHWAYS

The transfer to the state on July 1, 1931, of 45,000 miles of county highways occasioned many major problems. Since the highway problem in North Carolina is now principally one of maintenance, the state was divided into five divisions, each division consisting of approximately 11,000 miles of highways, approximately 2000 miles of which were marked and designated as state highways and the remainder as local roads. An experienced engineer was located in each of these divisions, with large discretionary power.

Each of the five divisions in turn was divided into five districts, comprising an average of four counties; fewer in the case of larger counties and more in the case of small counties. For each of these districts there was selected an experienced highway engineer, chosen largely from the personnel of the old state highway commission but in some instances from the personnel of the former county highway commission. The districts comprising on the average about 2200 miles of road were in turn again divided into sections, and the patrol system of maintenance was established. For the purpose of accounting the expenditures on the state highways are kept separate from the expenditures on the local roads and for the most part the section foreman or patrolman finds his section composed entirely of either one class or the other. In some instances for convenience the section is composed in part of state highway mileage and in part of local road mileage. The sections average about forty-five miles each but they are so grouped that the patrolman is rarely required to go more than six or seven miles from the center of his territory.

One of the fears entertained about the new system was that, on account of the immense mileage widely scattered over the whole state, the roads of outlying communities would be neglected. This danger was obviated by grouping local roads in each community; and by giving the section foreman, a resident of the community, sufficient authority and discretion to meet all emergencies without waiting to communicate with a superior authority. The result has been that many sections of the state, remote from local seats of influence, now find themselves with one of their own citizens engaged in daily rounds upon their roads, giving them much closer attention than was received under county management.

SHORT-TERM PRISONERS AND ROAD MAINTENANCE

Closely associated with road maintenance is the problem of short term prisoners. For a long time it had been the practice in North Carolina to sentence such men to work upon the public roads. About half of the counties of the state maintained prison camps for this purpose, and prisoners from any of the other counties were transferred to such counties as had established prison camps. On July 1, 1931, when the state assumed control of the roads, it was required to take over these prisoners who numbered at that time 3713 men. The number has since grown to nearly 4,000. Under county management these prisoners were used principally in construction gangs for the building of new roads. The state commission immediately began the construction of new camps and the scattering out into wider territory of these prisoners, in order to make them available for extra work gangs on the maintenance of highways.

The general assembly of 1931 established a state department of purchase and contract and incorporated as one of the units of that department the existing state highway purchasing department. At the present writing all machinery, together with its repairs, and all supplies, including oil and gasoline, are purchased under contracts made by this department.

When the roads were handled by more than a hundred county and township organizations, many of them without sufficient funds to employ competent accountants and without any uniform and well established system of accounting, it was impossible to develop cost records that were of much value as guides to the administrative officers. Under the state system, with the valuable assistance of the bureau of public roads at Washington, an accounting system has been set up that constantly reflects to the administrative officers the details of the entire operation. At the time this is written, statistics regarding the first nine months of operation were made available to the writer. The survey conducted jointly by the bureau of public roads, the state tax commission, and the state highway commission showed that the counties spent for maintenance during 1930 a total sum of $6,567,146.86.[3] Many of the poorer counties, however, had almost no organized maintenance. In fact, forty of the poorer counties spent an average of only eighty-five dollars per mile upon their road systems. In many of them no regular patrol system existed and hundreds of miles of road received no attention at all. For this year the state highway commission budgeted for the maintenance of the local roads the sum of $6,000,000 and the state, of course, had to make its system of maintenance cover the entire road system of all counties. The records at this writing show there has been expended on county maintenance betterment and construction, $4,442,281.04. Assuming that the remaining three months will call for about the same average expenditure, it will be seen that total expenditures will be under the budget allotment.

[3] Cost of maintenance alone. Total road expenditures of all counties and townships during 1930 reached a total of $8,233,280.93, excluding transactions covering short-term notes executed and paid during the year.

Public opinion in the state seems to be entirely in favor of the new highway law. When it is recalled that this year no property taxes of any kind are being levied for highways, that this action has relieved property of a gross levy of $5,250,000, that apparently a more complete and unified highway service is being rendered, it can readily be seen that rural people especially, are favorable to the state support plan.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In writing the school machinery act under which the principle of complete support was to be made operative, the general assembly had no pattern to guide it. It had to rely wholly upon its own judgment. It succeeded, however, in presenting a law which is remarkably clear.

No other state, with the possible exception of Delaware, has tried either to finance the total cost or to operate the schools as a state system. Yet both of these things were accomplished by this act without interference with local control and initiative. No parts of the old law were discarded except such as were in direct conflict with the main principle.

The school committee is retained in the rural schools and, with the approval of the county superintendent, it selects the teachers. Although the state pays the entire operating cost, no one can send a teacher into a school community without the consent of the school committee through whom the people speak. The boards of trustees in charter districts select their own teachers and superintendents as heretofore, and exercise control over the policies of the schools to the same extent as in the past. The law in no way interferes with their powers and duties.

The county board of education, nominated by the people and appointed by the general assembly, is retained with widened and increased powers. The

local people are still in charge of the administrative procedure. The county board of education still elects the county superintendent, organizes the schools, employs truck drivers, lays out truck routes, and exercises its discretion over the business affairs of the schools as fully and freely as ever.

No one is better qualified to comment upon the experience under the new law than Dr. A. T. Allen, North Carolina's state superintendent of public instruction. In a memorandum to the writer on April 1, he writes as follows:

> The operation of the six months' schools has been more satisfactory than any of us had reason to expect when we began last fall. The appropriation made by the legislature has proved sufficient to pay the bills necessary for the operation of the six months' schools within the objects of expenditure assumed by the state. . . .
>
> I have been surprised at the unanimity with which the local administrative school officials have accepted this new principle of school support. . . . Even cities like Asheville and Charlotte which at first were most doubtful were convinced that they have had a much easier time operating their schools than they would have had under the old law. I believe I would be safe in saying that the principle of state support now has the approval of ninety per cent of the administrative officials in school work.
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> Of course, there are many little nagging things in the law that cause considerable worry and some trouble. These can easily be remedied by the general assembly if it sees fit to continue the principle.

COUNTY FINANCE

In the carrying out of the Local Government Act, the commission has employed in addition to the office force, field men to advise and assist in a friendly and coöperative spirit. Considerable improvement has already been made in the financial condition and administration of the counties.

With respect to the debt control features of the law, the policy of the commission has been to allow local units to refund any reasonable amount of indebtedness already incurred, when the annual payments are large, but it has not allowed any bonds to be issued for new debts except in emergency cases. The amount of revenue anticipation loans has been greatly reduced. Securities have been sold by the commission at far more favorable terms than the local units have received. Local authorities are wholeheartedly coöperating with the commission, the act has been well received, and the showing which has already been made has proved workable and beneficial to the local units of government.[4]

TAXATION

Through the above measures the state was successful in making a definite tax reduction which has been felt in a material way by the taxpayers. The new plan of school support relieved property of an average of 32½ cents for the six months' term. (County rates for the six months' term in 1930 averaged 47½ cents.) This reduction itself amounted to $9,650,000. The road legislation relieved property of a gross levy of $5,250,000. The net reduction from the road legislation was, however, only $2,500,000—a reduction in rate of 8½ cents. The counties last year used $2,750,000 of the three-million-dollar state aid fund for road debt service. When the state assumed the complete cost of road maintenance, it did not, of course, continue this three-million-dollar appropriation. The total reduction in rate resulting from the school and road legislation was forty-one cents on an assessed value of $2,975,000,000, or $12,160,000 in taxes.

The total property tax levy in 1930 was $60,000,000. The twelve-million-dollar reduction represented a decrease of 20 per cent in the levy of all units.

[4] See *United States Daily*, April 8, 1932, for statement by Governor Gardner regarding the operation of the act.

This decrease in property taxes is, of course, not reflected uniformly throughout the state. Counties formerly having the highest rates for schools and roads received the biggest reduction in rate. Rural property, on the whole, received a larger percentage reduction in rate for schools and roads as rural property; but town property also bears an additional rate for municipal purposes, and the 1931 legislation provided no reduction in levies for strictly municipal purposes except the incidental check in their increase arising from state supervision of municipal debt.

A comparison of the 1931 rates and assessed values with the 1930 rates and valuations has been made for ninety-one of the one hundred counties in the state. This comparison shows that the average total reduction in rate in 1931 from 1930 is 33 cents and that the 1931 valuations are 5 per cent under 1930 valuations. If this reduction should hold through for the other nine counties, the total reduction in property taxes levied by counties will aggregate $9,750,000. This study shows further that except for a net increase of $2,400,000 levied for debt service the actual reduction of the tax burden on property in counties alone would total $12,250,000. The comparison of district and municipal levies in 1931 with 1930 has not yet been made. Preliminary examination of annual reports clearly indicates a substantial reduction, but not nearly as large as is shown in county levies. The indication is clear, however, that the total actual reduction will reach twelve millions.

State revenues are holding up fairly well. Up to March 31, income tax collections from individuals and from foreign corporations exceeded collections from these sources for the entire preceding fiscal year. While some of the collections from the various schedules are not reaching the estimates made when the 1931 legislature adjourned, it seems apparent that the program will stand up.

CONCLUSION

It is perhaps possible to draw some conclusions concerning North Carolina's experience which might have some general interest. In the first place, people in the state are willing to adopt almost any new system, structure or plan of government provided it offers definite tax relief.

Secondly, on the basis of present available information it can be stated with some definiteness that the state has maintained the roads which over one hundred local rural road organizations formerly maintained, more efficiently, has given an improved road service, and has done so at a substantially decreased cost. Factual evidence as to schools is not yet in such form as to be able to give any definite picture. Suffice it to say, had not the state assumed financial responsibility for operating the schools, in more than one county the citizens this year would have experienced closed school houses, no teachers and shortened terms.

A particularly interesting conclusion can be drawn with reference to the county manager movement. Today, in a state which has had more county managers than any other state, there remains but one real county manager (in Durham County). With the liquidation of functions from the county there is left in the county insufficient administrative work to occupy the full-time efforts of a county manager. North Carolina pioneered in the county manager direction in 1927; now, under its new policy, it has no vital need for the county manager plan.

The county of North Carolina will gradually fade from the picture (if it has not already done so). It can thus be realized that the current movement and agitation, visualizing a unified county government has little application to North Carolina.

The County, the Logical Public Health Unit

REASONS why the county is preferred over other units of local government

BY M. E. BARNES, M.D. *State University of Iowa*

IN approaching this subject it is desirable to present briefly the following six general considerations:

1. THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC HEALTH IS UNDERGOING A CHANGE

The basic objective of public health work is now, as it ever has been, the prevention of disease. A profound change is taking place, however, in our conception as to what this involves and as to the methods whereby it may be attained. Formerly, communities were disposed to adopt a purely defensive attitude toward disease. They waited until mounting morbidity rates indicated not the approach, but the actual presence in their midst, of an epidemic. Roused to action they quarantined the known victims, often ignorantly leaving channels of infection wide open; they closed the schools, usually neglecting other agencies for congregating the children; and at times adopted measures excusable only on the basis of hysteric fear. One classic example of such absurdity was when a small city expended $2,500 in fumigating a lumber yard where a vagrant suffering from smallpox had been found.

Under the new concept, due consideration is given to the fact that individual resistance is a determining factor in the development of disease; that the various pathogenic organisms require certain conditions for growth; that they follow certain general paths in their transfer from individual to individual; that prevention is possible by blocking these channels and by building up individual resistance; and that the most effective defense lies in taking the offensive. Under such a conception it is no longer permissible or, in fact, excusable for a community to await passively the onset of transmissible diseases. By proper aggressive action the likelihood of such outbreaks may be materially reduced, and the extensiveness of such epidemics as do occur, controlled.

2. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES RECOGNIZE NO LEGAL BOUNDARIES

Communicable diseases never did recognize legal boundaries. However, such isolation as these boundaries once implied has been completely abolished by the improved roads and the universal use of the automobile. In so far as health conditions are concerned, entire counties and even entire states are in reality a single community.

3. PUBLIC HEALTH WORK IS A SPECIALTY

Modern public health work is a specialty, requiring personnel adequately and specially trained. Physicians and nurses are not by virtue of their ordinary professional training qualified for conducting this work. Post graduate work, or at least intensive specialized training, has become a necessity if a

comprehensive health program along modern and sound lines is to be carried out. This applies also to inspectors and other members of the staff.

4. WHOLE-TIME HEALTH SERVICE IS ESSENTIAL

The problems involved in modern health work are so extensive, so complicated, and of such great importance as to require the whole-time service of the staff. No adequate health work is possible under a system of part-time or volunteer service. Responsibility must be placed for the control of conditions affecting health just as it is now placed for the control and prevention of fire, ignorance, and crime. This consideration alone places adequate health service beyond the financial reach of all communities acting individually except cities of sufficiently large size.

5. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE MUST BE ESSENTIALLY LOCAL IN CHARACTER

Permanent advance in public health is possible only in so far as it is based upon public coöperation. The latter, in turn, involves recognition of individual responsibility, for each individual either augments or aids in the solution of a community's health problems. Except in times of great emergency, however, there is little sense of individual responsibility extending beyond the community in which the individual feels that he has a direct and somewhat obvious share. For this reason, valuable as are the national and state health organizations, the local department of health is the most important of all health organizations in so far as the residents of a given community are concerned. Through it alone does a community become health conscious and develop a health conscience.

6. THE ENFORCEMENT OF HEALTH LAWS IS BASED SOLELY UPON POLICE POWERS

The benefits of modern health service to a community are secured chiefly through persuasion. Hygiene, like morals, is an expression of community character rather than the result of repressive legal action. No health department, however, could long function without the power to force recalcitrant individuals to conform their actions to the common good. The legal power behind a department of health rests solely upon police power, and this resides in a governmental unit. Consequently, the jurisdiction of a health organization must coincide with recognized governmental units.

THE COUNTY AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS

These general considerations indicate that the base of operations must be large enough to cope with health problems efficiently; it must be small enough to capitalize the local sense of responsibility; and it must coincide with established governmental units. The base is limited, therefore, to units of local government or to combinations of such units. Of these, there are in our system of government the township, town, city, and county.

The township and town are ruled out by the general considerations outlined above. They provide too small a base, and cannot support an effective service. The chaos of such a scheme of organization is evidenced in one state which has 1,610 township and 813 town boards of health—a total of 2,423 local boards of health, each of which employs a part-time health officer. The remuneration paid to these health officers is not worthy of being called remuneration at all, and such service as they render represents almost entirely a contribution on their part. Cities of sufficient size may and do support health work on a more satisfactory basis, but the benefits of such work accrue to the residents only, and are lessened by the lack of such service in the surrounding communities.

As a general rule, the county affords the most logical base of health organ-

ization. It is large enough to bear without undue burden the financial load. It provides the largest unit of local government, in which the sense of local responsibility can be capitalized.

Rural and urban dwellers cannot escape the fact that their health problems are common. Neither, acting independently, can solve these problems. This has been amply demonstrated by past experience, yet there exists a strange community blindness when the proposition is raised for effecting a change. This is not true regarding the combatting of ignorance and crime. It has long been recognized that independent action is futile and that county-wide jurisdiction is essential. The prevention of disease and the promotion of health are infinitely more difficult than either of these. To attack health problems under the archaic system of township and town governments is not only hopeless, it is absurd.

The ineffectiveness of this plan is evidenced by the data presented before the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection which shows the great disadvantage of rural pre-school children as compared with city children of the same age. From the rural population there continues to come a very considerable proportion of our leaders in state, national and international life. As has been pointed out, the cost of se curing health protection is prohibitive for these communities acting individually. How then shall such service be made available to them?

POOLING AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The answer, fortunately, is simple; and may be summed up in one word—coöperation. By pooling available resources, there are comparatively few counties which would be unable to support a county-wide health department. In hundreds of counties in Alabama, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Virginia, and various other states, such units have been successfully operated for years on annual budgets ranging from 35 cents to 50 cents per capita.

The limits of this article preclude a full discussion of the advantages of this arrangement or the citing of illustrative data. Among the advantages which have accompanied the development of these units have been:

1. Increased reporting and consequent more effective control over communicable diseases.
2. The locating of hidden cases of tuberculosis, care for contacts and for the cases, eliminating the latter from food handling and other dangerous occupations.
3. Declining morbidity and death rates from the group of preventable diseases.
4. Improved health and dental inspections among school children, and the correction of defects.
5. More adequate prenatal, maternal and infant care.
6. Improved environmental hygiene, relating specifically to private and public water supplies, the disposal of night soil, and the abatement of nuisances.
7. Supervision of the production and handling of milk.
8. Supervision of the health of food handlers.
9. More adequate measures for the control of venereal disease.
10. The development of what may be termed a community conscience in matters pertaining to health, evidenced by increasing individual coöperation.

Taking into consideration the low cost of operation when the county is used as the base, the high degree of efficiency with respect to service for both urban and rural inhabitants, the economic saving in illness prevented, the emotional saving in connection with deaths prevented and the immeasurable assets to a community in having on duty day and night a corps of trained fighters of disease, it is conservative to say that no county can afford to be without a whole-time county department of health.

The Indiana Township—An Anachronism

THE Indiana township and its trustees are fighting for existence

BY FRANK G. BATES

Indiana University

IN Indiana as elsewhere the present economic depression is reflected in decreased tax receipts and increased expenditures for public relief which have in turn brought demands for greater efficiency and economy in local government. The township has become the storm center of the agitation.

DUAL TOWNSHIPS

Indiana belongs to that group of states in which the performance of the functions of local government is apportioned between the county and the township. The whole area of the state is divided into something more than one thousand townships which in many parts of the state have no geographic relation to the "congressional" townships. The state is fortunate in the fact that although the township is mentioned repeatedly in the state constitution the only mandatory provision therein is that "a competent number of justices of the peace shall be elected in every township." With respect to other matters both of organization and functions, the legislature is given free hand by the prescription that "Such . . . . township officers as may be necessary shall be elected, or appointed, in such manner as may be prescribed by law."

Legally there exist two corporate entities superimposed, the "civil township," including the whole area of the township, the territory of the incorporated cities and towns as well as that of the rural districts; and the "school township," which excludes the area of cities but not of all incorporated towns. This duality was created primarily to double the capacity of the community to borrow money, since all municipal corporations are restricted in their borrowing power to an amount equal to two per cent of their assessed valuation.

During the last half-century there has been in Indiana a trend toward centralization of control and of function more pronounced than in neighboring states, particularly in the fields of public health, education, public utilities and finance. This trend is especially noticeable in the latter field, where the control by the state tax commission and the department of supervision and inspection of public offices has attracted widespread notice as the "Indiana plan."

TOWNSHIP LOSING POWERS

Within the county the same tendency to centralization has manifested itself to a somewhat lesser extent. While outdoor relief is still administered by the township, indoor relief which is administered in the county home is a charge on the county. Likewise, while the assessment of property for taxation is a township function, it is performed under the supervision of a county assessor. The construction of improved highways, aside from city and town streets, has

been until recently exclusively at the expense of the township, although the specifications are prepared and contracts awarded by the county commissioners. Moreover, upon completion the highways pass immediately under the administration of the county highway superintendent and become a part of the county system. By recent statute many arterial highways have been taken over and improved by the county as "county unit" roads. Thus only the unimproved or "mud" roads are maintained by the township.

In educational affairs centralization within the township has resulted in the abolition of all school districts, although in remoter regions the one-room school still lingers. The school property of the school township, which it will be remembered excludes the incorporated cities, is administered for the township by the trustee, who also purchases supplies, contracts for the transportation of pupils and employs the teachers. The supervision of instruction is in the hands of the county superintendent of schools, who is elected by the trustees of the several townships sitting as a county board of education.

THE TRUSTEE NOT SATISFACTORY

The principal township officials aside from justices of the peace, are the assessor, the advisory board and the trustee. The assessor is elected by the voters of the township and displays all the weaknesses of the elected assessor everywhere. The advisory board of three members receives the budget prepared by the trustee, authorizes allowances, makes appropriations, levies township taxes, and issues bonds. Of the four chief functions of the township, three, viz., roads, poor relief and education are administered by the trustee, who is the target of most of the present criticism of township government. He prepares the budget, acts as treasurer and expends the funds of the township. With the development of improved highways his activities in that direction have become progressively unimportant and negligible.

The administration of school affairs by the trustee has given rise to great dissatisfaction throughout the state. In spite of the state department of supervision and inspection of public offices and the state department of education, there is evidence of widespread graft and corruption in the purchase of supplies and school buses and in the contracting for the transportation of pupils. Nepotism, petty politics and even positive corruption in connection with the hiring of teachers are not unknown. There is a general conviction that there is excessive waste and misuse of funds in township school administration. Under the methods of election by township trustees the office of county superintendent has been made a political one in many cases with the result that these officials have not compared favorably with city superintendents selected by city school boards, nor have they been inspiring educational leaders in the rural community.

A growing popular dissatisfaction with the rural educational situation has led in recent years to a movement for the centralization of educational administration in the county under a county board of education and a county superintendent selected by that board, a proposal modeled after the existing system in incorporated cities which has proved generally satisfactory. The township trustees, however, have a militant state-wide organization which has thus far been able by an active lobby to defeat every effort to get a "county unit" bill through the general assembly.

MISUSE OF POOR FUNDS

The administration of outdoor poor relief by the trustee does not in ordinary times, outside the townships which in-

clude the larger cities, involve the handling of any considerable sums of money. The last two years, however, have seen the sums paid out for relief, even in rural areas, swell to proportions relatively large. Here, too, reports come in from many localities, rural as well as urban, of the gross misapplication of funds. To some extent this situation is due merely to the incapacity of honest trustees to meet an unfamiliar and at best a difficult task, but in many places there has undoubtedly been positive malfeasance. Well substantiated stories are rife of padding of grocery orders, payment for food and food supplies which are never delivered, assistance to those not in need and to large numbers of repeaters, and various forms of collusion between trustees and dealers; of trustees financially interested in firms with which bona fide or "phoney" orders are placed; of coal ordered to be delivered at vacant houses, and numerous other forms of shady transactions. Such proceedings have been legally brought to the door of more than one trustee.

The result has been a renewed outburst of feeling against the office, and a demand that it be abolished and the functions transferred to some appropriate county authority. It is believed by many that if those demanding this change will join forces with advocates of the "county unit" of school administration the combination may be able to overcome the trustees lobby in the next general assembly.

MUST THE TRUSTEE GO?

Various measures of reorganization are suggested and some proposals are almost sure to be presented at the next legislative session.[1] One suggestion is to abolish the township altogether and impose its present functions upon corresponding county officials. Another is to consolidate all townships in the county into a single one, coterminous with the county, with appropriate county officials performing the township functions. These plans meet with the objection that inequalities in public improvements and outstanding indebtedness among the several townships would arouse objections and make necessary somewhat perplexing financial readjustments. Although township consciousness and loyalties are generally weak if not non-existent, it is pointed out that in some quarters there would be opposition to these plans on grounds of sentiment.

A plan, less sweeping and more likely to find expression next winter before the general assembly, would retain the corporate existence of the civil and school townships, but abolish the office of trustee and probably those of the advisory board. Their present functions would then be consolidated in the hands of the corresponding county officers. The county highway superintendent could readily assume the attenuated functions of the trustee with respect to roads. The education functions would be transferred to a county board of education and to their appointed superintendent as already proposed in the "county unit" bill. There being at present no appropriate county authority for poor relief this would be met by the creation of a welfare board, or preferably a superintendent of county welfare.

The extent of the resulting economies is, of course, problematical, but it seems assured that the elimination of waste or worse and the efficiency gained through central administration of these functions would result in a considerable gain both economic and social. Any attempt to place such a plan upon the statute book will meet with strenuous resistance and the welkin will ring with fervid appeals that the God-given "right of local self-government" must be preserved and the "genius of our constitution" be not violated.

[1]Several bills having as their objectives the abolition of the township, their consolidation, the curtailing of their functions and the abolition of the office of trustee are now before a special session of the general assembly which convened on July 7.

Planning for Improved County Government In Virginia

VIRGINIA has a *plan* for her counties, part of which has already been put into practice

BY ROBERT H. TUCKER *Virginia Commission on County Government*

THROUGH legislation enacted at the 1932 session of the general assembly, Virginia has laid the foundation for a thoroughgoing reorganization of county government. Other states have adopted from time to time measures more far-reaching in their effects upon particular phases of county organization and procedure. Few states have hitherto adopted so complete and well rounded a program.

FEATURES OF THE VIRGINIA PROGRAM

The central point of the Virgina program lies in the provision for complete forms of county government which may be made effective in any county when approved by the qualified voters of the county. These forms include a *county executive* form which is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to counties of varying sizes and conditions, and a *county manager* form which is intended especially for urban counties and larger rural counties.

Both forms contemplate the consolidation of the county functions under a few major divisions, or departments, and the concentration of all the financial and technical affairs of the county under a policy-forming board of county supervisors, limited in number, elected on a county-wide basis, and provided with a competent executive head. The object is to promote unity of effort through the establishment of definite lines of control, to place responsibility, and to clarify the processes of county government to the people.

Additional measures provide for the voluntary consolidation of counties, for the joint employment of officers by two or more adjoining counties, or by counties and towns, and for the correction of certain major defects in the existing organization of county government in Virginia. The measures applicable to the present county organization are designed particularly to improve the county financial procedure, to safeguard county indebtedness, and to empower county boards of supervisors to require reports and to investigate the finances of the general county offices.

Other acts of the general assembly, developed apart from the county government program, abolished the fee system as a method of compensating county treasurers and commissioners of the revenue and placed all local highway systems, comprising more than 40,000 miles of county roads, under the jurisdiction and control of the state.

BACKGROUND AND ANTECEDENTS

The adoption of this significant body of legislation did not come through revolutionary change. It was preceded by more than a decade of thought and discussion on the subject of local government in Virginia, marked by the publication of three comprehensive re-

ports on county government and the passage of numerous measures designed to improve the organization and operation of the counties. In this way conspicuous improvements were effected in the operation of several Virginia counties. One county has recently set up a full-fledged county manager plan.

In the meantime the chief obstacle to the improvement of county government in Virginia lay in the state constitution. There for generations the present scattered and disjointed form of county organization had been embodied in most essential particulars. This obstacle was removed in 1928 when the constitution was so amended as to permit the counties to select by popular vote the character of their government from complete forms of organization to be provided by general law.

Pursuant to this constitutional change, the general assembly of 1930 provided for the creation of a continuing commission on county government. The duties of the commission were to draft a general law setting forth optional forms of county government, for submission to the general assembly of 1932; to analyze and interpret statistics as to the cost of county government; and to inform the citizens of the counties concerning the conduct of their governmental affairs. A comprehensive report on the organization and management of county government in Virginia represents the first fruit of this commission's labors.

COUNTY CONDITIONS IN VIRGINIA

The chief weakness of county government in Virginia lies, the commission found, in the form of organization through which the counties of the state are compelled to function.

In some respects the conditions of county government in Virginia are simpler than they are in many other states. Virginia is still predominantly an agricultural state and it has never developed to any considerable degree the idea of special districts, with the resulting overlapping and often conflicting jurisdictions. Moreover, Virginia is unique among the states in providing for the complete separation of cities, financially and politically, from the counties in which they are located. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that county organization in Virginia is amazingly complex.

GENERAL PLAN OF COUNTY ORGANIZATION

This organization consists of some thirty or forty separate and distinct offices, manned by from sixty to ninety administrative, or semi-administrative, officers. Many offices have been continued for little reason except that they have come down from past generations. Others have apparently been tacked on to meet new demands as they arose.

The county officers are responsible to various sources of authority. Approximately one-third of these officers are appointed by the circuit judge. Some are appointed by state boards or departments. A large number are appointed by the county board of supervisors and subordinate county boards, and the rest are elected by the people of the counties.

It is thus a truism to say that there is no central authority in the counties; no head of the county government at all. The county board of supervisors, the nominal head of the county, can exercise but little control over the county as a whole. Its jurisdiction is limited to such activities as the construction and maintenance of roads, the supervision of public property, the care of the poor, and the determination of the tax levy. It functions side by side with numerous officers who are elected in the same manner as the members of the board.

Waste and inefficiency are inevitable under these conditions. Systematic planning from the point of view of the

county as a whole is impossible. Duplication of functions and expenses is unavoidable. Moreover, in the maze of officers and boards the people have no means of controlling, or indeed of comprehending, the processes of their government. The county is thus not only wasteful and inefficient, but irresponsible and undemocratic. It presents a picture of administrative confusion which violates almost every principle of sound business organization.

FINANCIAL INADEQUACY

The conditions just described are complicated and intensified by two other problems. One of these is the expensiveness of the smaller unit in road building, public health work, public welfare work, and other county functions. The other is the problem of the poor county, the county which has not the economic ability to provide the services necessary to meet the requirements of modern community life.

There are many counties in Virginia which are clearly unable to meet these requirements. Thirty-one counties of the state, almost one-third of the total, have fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, while several counties have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. In twenty-nine counties the estimated wealth subject to local taxation is less than $10,000,000. In four it is less than $5,000,000.

THE REMEDIES PROPOSED

With a view to remedying these conditions, the commission on county government recommended the adoption of a six-fold program, as follows:

(1) Provision by general law for two optional forms of county organization—a county executive form and a county manager form.

(2) In connection with these forms, the abolition of the fee system as a method of compensating public officers, except certain part-time officers having a regular occupation aside from the government service.

(3) The passage of a general law affording the counties that so desire the opportunity to consolidate or to unite with adjoining counties or towns in the formation of areas in which certain county functions may be combined under one administrative head.

(4) The passage of a law sharply reducing the number and jurisdiction of justices of the peace and requiring each county to appoint a trial justice, either separately or jointly with one or more counties.

(5) The passage of a law empowering the board of supervisors of the county to appoint the county school board.

(6) The passage of a number of special measures designed to correct specific administrative defects. These measures were applicable especially to counties operating under the present form of county organization in Virginia. They provided particularly for effective budgeting and auditing control, centralized purchasing, safeguarding county indebtedness, and the employment of county road engineers.

The proposals included the abolition of numerous minor county offices, comprising more than 2000 officers, such as surveyors, coroners, constables and justices of the peace, and the transfer of their functions to the proper divisions of the county government.

THE OPTIONAL FORMS

The county executive form is a modification of the county manager idea. It is designed to afford a form of organization sufficiently flexible to be adapted to counties of all sizes and conditions, as well as to meet the requirements of counties which may be unwilling to accept the manager form in its full technical sense.

Under the county executive form the board of county supervisors is empow-

ered to appoint a chief executive—a full-time officer or the head of one of the divisions of the county government—to serve as the administrative head of the county. The county executive would carry out the policies determined by the board, coördinate the affairs of the county and see that efficient methods are installed. Other county officers would be appointed by the board on the recommendation of the county executive.

In the county manager form administrative authority is more definitely concentrated under the manager. In this case the manager appoints the department heads and subordinate officers and assumes full responsibility for directing and supervising the work of the various departments. The manager form provides a greater concentration of administrative responsibility. The executive form has the advantage of being more flexible.

Both forms vest the general powers of the county in a board of county supervisors composed of not fewer than three or more than seven members and elected, one from each magisterial district, by the voters of the county as a whole. The board is the legislative or policy-forming body of the county, charged with general responsibility for all the financial and technical affairs of the county. Both forms provide also for the appointment of all the county officers, except the clerk and the commonwealth's attorney; for the abolition of the fee system; and for the consolidation of the county functions into a small number of divisions or departments. The board is further empowered to transfer, allocate or consolidate functions; and provision is made for the coöperation of state and county authorities in the appointment and direction of certain local officers engaged in performing services for both the county and the state.

OTHER FORMS CONSIDERED

Naturally a question may be raised as to why the commission did not include a greater variety of forms of county organization in its proposals. For this there are several important reasons.

In the first place, the commission concluded that it would be wiser to hold to a few simple forms known to be effective than to attempt to present all possible varieties of choice. Too many forms might easily lead to confusion in the minds of the voters. The commission felt also that when the people of the counties are aroused to the point of reorganizing their local government, this reorganization should be reasonably thorough and effectual. It discarded, therefore, numerous plans involving minor modifications or superficial changes in administrative structure, which too often have been mistaken for real and lasting governmental reform.

In the second place, the investigations of the commission indicated that among those counties which have recently modified their governmental structure, the most substantial results have been achieved through the development of strong executive control.

Similar reasons led to the rejection of the county commission form, which in last analysis would mean government through a multiplicity of heads rather than through a single responsible head.

The county administrator, or elective manager, form of organization cannot be so easily dismissed. This form has much to commend it, and the elective feature appeals strongly to a considerable portion of the voting population. Aside from the well-known technical objections to this plan, the commission concluded that it is ill adapted to conditions in Virginia, which has no civil service system and is unlikely to develop such a system in the near future. Through the unrestricted power of appointment, the plan would concentrate an enormous amount of power in the

hands of a single individual and afford unlimited opportunity for the creation of a personal political machine. In a state with a well-developed civil service system, the answer might well have been different.

RESULTS IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

While not all of the proposals were adopted by the general assembly, the vital points of the program were enacted into law. The bill providing the optional forms of county government was adopted with a single significant amendment making the sheriff an elective officer. Likewise the bills providing for the voluntary consolidation of counties and the creation of administrative areas were passed without material change.

The independent measures suffered varying fortunes. Bills designed to extend the powers of boards or supervisors with respect to the general offices of the county, to provide for centralized purchasing, to safeguard county indebtedness, and to prevent the omission of delinquent property from the delinquent tax list were passed without amendment. The county budgeting and auditing act was passed, but vetoed by the governor partly on technical grounds and partly because the auditor of public accounts had recently developed effective plans under the existing law. The rest of the bills were defeated or killed in committee.

To the foregoing must be added the passage of a bill providing for the abandonment of fees and commissions as a means of compensating county treasurers and commissioners of the revenue, and a bill empowering the governor to remove for cause treasurers or other officers charged with collecting or accounting for public funds

An unanticipated feature of the session was the passage of the county road bill, sponsored by former Governor Harry F. Byrd. This measure abolished road work by the counties and assigned to the state the responsibility for the entire local highway system. It thus eliminates all county highway departments except in such counties as may by popular vote elect to operate outside the provisions of this act.

CONTROLLING FORCES IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Virginia county government program is significant both for its content and for the forces and influences that brought about its adoption. Not often has so complete a program been adopted at a single session of the general assembly. Especially significant also was the action of the general assembly in assigning the administration of highways exclusively to the state. In Virginia the sentiment for local self-government has always been strong. Moreover, the various bills were not free from opposition from interested sources.

It is not easy to appraise the forces and influences which come into play in a contest of this kind. Some factors in the situation are, however, reasonably clear. The general assembly met under conditions of state-wide unrest over financial affairs. The demand for reduction of taxes and curtailment of governmental expenses was universal. The conditions and needs in this respect were forcefully expressed by Governor Pollard in his opening message to the general assembly. Moreover, the governor emphasized the work of the commission on county government as charting a new course in the development of local self-government in Virginia, and placed the strength of the state administration clearly behind the proposals made in the report.

On the whole the underlying idea of the Virginia program is to promote local self-government by leaving to local determination matters of purely local concern. The program attempts to provide a sound form of organization and then to place the responsibility squarely upon the people of the counties.

The Progress of County Consolidation

THE growing sentiment for consolidation to eliminate needless costs

BY J. W. MANNING

University of Kentucky

DESPITE the opposition of local politicians, who have fed so long at the county treasury, and the seeming impossibility and impracticability of attainment, the idea of county consolidation persists in cropping out as we search for a solution for our county problems.

The question has been, and is now being considered by state tax commissions in a number of states, and wherever such matters are investigated the reports always recommend the reduction in the number of counties. Definite proposals for the consolidation of particular counties have been made by official bodies, the press, or civic groups in 17 states as follows: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. In addition, consideration is being given to the merging of counties in 15 other states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming.

PIONEER WORK OF TENNESSEE

Tennessee was the first state in the Union to consolidate any of its counties, or to propose a definite scheme of complete county consolidation. In 1919 two counties—James and Hamilton—were consolidated. At that time James County, the smaller and poorer of the two, at its own request, was abolished, and the territory added to Hamilton County, of which Chattanooga is the county seat. This consolidation has proved extremely beneficial to residents of James County, as is shown by several surveys of the situation. However, some dissatisfaction with the merger has been voiced in Hamilton County. The merger has brought about better government at less cost in the smaller and poorer county, but the taxpayers of the larger and richer county have found themselves saddled with an additional burden. Of course, the reduction in overhead has meant more economical administration over the entire area.

This merger once accomplished, further suggestions for consolidation in Tennessee were forthcoming. In 1927 the county courts in two counties agreed to a consolidation and a measure was presented to the state legislature, only to die in the committee; and in 1928 two state officials suggested a plan for redistricting the state, reducing the number of counties from ninety-five to less than fifty; one of these officials went so far as to draw a definite plan for recasting the state into eleven new units. Even in the face of obvious economies to be effected, nothing further has been done in this direction in Tennessee.[1]

[1] Manning, J. W., "Governance in Tennessee Counties," S. W. Pol. & Soc. Sci. Quar. 11: 173-181, Sept. 1930.

THE COUNTY SITUATION IN GEORGIA

In proportion to its area, Georgia has more counties than any other state in the Union, and it holds second place to Texas with the largest number of counties of the entire forty-eight states. Instead of decreasing the number of counties in Georgia, it has been the practice, until recently, constantly to increase the number of county units. On January 1, 1932, the number of counties was reduced from 161 to 159, when Campbell and Milton Counties, upon authority of referenda authorized by the state legislature, were consolidated with Fulton County, of which Atlanta is the county seat.

In recent years there has been a movement of considerable energy to reduce the number of counties in the state, and thus reduce the cost of local government. During the summer of 1930, after insistent demands had been made for a study of the situation, the Georgia Tax Revision Association employed Dr. H. L. Lutz of Princeton University to make a survey of Georgia's revenue problems. Among the many suggestions made in his report to the governor in November, 1930, the Princeton tax authority recommended, as a most important step, the reduction in the number of counties. The survey showed that there were forty-two counties in 1928 with a total assessment between $1,000,000 and $2,000,000, which with the seven counties below $1,000,000, makes forty-nine counties so weak in resources as to give no warrant for their separate existence. It was recommended that "legislation should be enacted promptly which would smooth the way for county consolidation and facilitate it in every possible way."

But, even before the Lutz report was made, sentiment had crystallized in Campbell and Fulton Counties, which resulted in a special act in August, 1929, authorizing elections in Campbell and Fulton Counties on the question of consolidation. Another special bill was passed by the legislature in 1931 authorizing the addition of Milton County to the proposed two-county consolidation. Elections were held in 1931 in these three counties, which resulted in decisive majorities for the consolidation.

This merger is looked upon as the beginning of a more or less extensive consolidation of many of the smaller and poorer counties of the state, with the larger and wealthier units.

CONSOLIDATION PROPOSED IN NEW YORK

In a speech, early in 1928, before the Bar Association of New York, former Governor Smith described the New York state system of local government as obsolete, and recommended the appointment of a commission to study the subject of reorganization. In the *New York Times,* March 11, 1928, J. C. Young outlined the governor's comprehensive plan to recast the sixty-two counties of the state into some forty new units, grouped into regions of common interest. This scheme was advocated by Governor Smith as a means of reducing the cost of local government and simplifying and centralizing administration so that local governmental affairs might be carried out more satisfactorily. No official action has been taken on this program, but the press, through the editorial column, has urged such a reorganization from time to time. Senator Seabury C. Mastick and Assemblyman Louis A. Cuvillier are committed to consolidation of local governmental units.

COUNTY "COÖPERATION" IN VIRGINIA

For the past few years there has been some agitation for the readjustment of county areas in Virginia, and an examination of the situation reveals the fact that some progress has been made in this direction. "The state today mani-

fests an awareness of county and rural problems that indicates that maladjustments will yield to a solution by research and popular appreciation and support of alterations."[2] Many of Virginia's one hundred counties are suffering from the lack of economic resources and taxable wealth sufficient to support a going county governmental structure. Less than one-half of the counties are able to claim a tax base of more than $20,000,000, computed at full valuation. In many counties the tax burden fails to correspond with farm income, or with estimated wealth, expressed as full valuation, or with the income of the farmer. The warning has been issued that "unless the present situation is recognized, the territorial lines of the county will freeze natural economic inequalities between counties into a permanent condition so as to ensure a continuance of extra tax burdens imposed by geography."[3]

During the session of the Virginia Assembly in January, 1930, a commission was appointed to study various forms of county government with a view to making recommendations to the assembly in January, 1931. The accomplishments of this commission are discussed by Dean Tucker in this issue.

Barring a political earthquake, the question of consolidation becomes the practical plan of adapting the county to resources and population required to sustain its functions and expenditures. As an alternative to consolidation, several plans of districting the several counties for designated services have been carried through to completion. This might be called county "coöperation" instead of county consolidation. In regard to the form of organization for local health work, there are several instances, for example, Princess Anne and the Isle of Wight, where a single county unit has been unable to sustain itself except by conversion into a two-county unit. This same sort of coöperation has taken place in regard to the building of almshouses. By mid-year 1929, sixty-seven counties in Virginia had abolished their almshouses;[4] and in some cases as many as eight counties have coöperated in establishing a district home.[5] This form of coöperation signifies the creation of a new regional type of government. In comparison with metropolitan areas, we may call such an arrangement a "rural region." Because of the difficulties involved, this weakening-from-within process may replace the efforts toward county consolidation in other states as well as Virginia, and it may satisfy many whose local fervor causes them to cling to the county as a name; and many of our county officeholders will be left with a title to an office, but with few, if any, duties to perform.

NORTH CAROLINA

With the introduction of the county manager plan, North Carolina has taken first place among all the states of the Union in the matter of county government reform. Not only has reform taken the manager form in the state, but there has been considerable agitation for the reduction in the number of counties. The Institute for Governmental Research of the Brookings Institution was employed by Governor Gardner to make a survey of the organization and administration of county government in the state, and in its report which was submitted February 4, 1931, it was definitely recommended that North Carolina's one hundred counties be reduced

[2] Kilpatrick, W., "Readjusting County Areas in Virginia," *Minnesota Municipalities*, XV: 266, July, 1930.

[3] Ibid.

[4] *Virginia Municipal Review*, p. 49, April 1929. The number was brought to sixty-seven when Patrick County joined with Campbell, Amherst, Halifax, Pittsylvania, and Henry counties in the erection of a district almshouse.

[5] Kilpatrick, Wylie, Op. Cit., p. 269.

to eighty-eight. Ten specific instances of possible consolidation were suggested, and in addition it was recommended that the state give some consideration to the feasibility of combining some ten or twelve other counties.[6]

Late in 1930 some interest was aroused in Stokes County, North Carolina, to annex that county to the more populous and wealthier county of Forsyth. The matter has received some attention through newspaper interviews, but it appears that the movement has not as yet been taken seriously by Forsyth County.

TOO MANY COUNTIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts the press has given some attention to the readjustment of county areas, but no action of an official or semi-official nature has been taken. It has been pointed out that there are several instances where adjoining counties might be consolidated economically, jails and court houses could be consolidated and whole groups of offices abolished, and "such anomalies as the superimposed existence of an entity like Suffolk County upon the municipality of Boston could be corrected."[7] Because of the activities of the "county rings" in their interference with progressive state programs, the press has inquired why there are so many counties in the state. In this state consolidation is looked upon as a measure "politically devastating to the county rings" and "politically purifying to the commonwealth; economically sound; and administratively sensible." It has been suggested that "Massachusetts could probably get along comfortably with seven counties where there are now fourteen."[8]

[6] *Report on a Survey of the Organization and Administration of County Government in North Carolina,* pp. 21-26, 1931, The Brookings Institution.

[7] *Springfield Weekly Republican,* July 26, 1928.

[8] *Springfield Weekly Republican,* March 21, 1929.

CONSOLIDATION UNDER WAY IN ARKANSAS AND KANSAS

The consolidation of the counties of Arkansas has been suggested by the *Arkansas Gazette,* and that newspaper is now waging a campaign in favor of such a move in the direction of economy and efficiency of government in the state. Representative Charles Fleming has made the definite proposal that the 75 Arkansas counties be consolidated into twenty-five. In Kansas, a bill was introduced in the legislature of that state to reduce the number of counties from 105 to 54 but it died in committee. The Kansas City *Star* approved the plan in general.

A CONSOLIDATION SCHEME PROPOSED IN KENTUCKY

More and more attention is being given the matter of consolidating Kentucky's one hundred twenty counties. Little of a definite nature has been accomplished, but the idea of reducing the number of counties is being considered as one of the best means of reducing taxes and lowering the costs of government in the state. At the annual meeting of the State Association of County Judges in Paducah, on May 30, 1930, the consolidation of the counties of the state into thirty or forty units was urged as a needed governmental reform. A similar suggestion was made by Walter Smith, county attorney of Bell County, at the December, 1931, meeting of the County Attorneys' Association in Louisville. The press has also suggested that one of the best ways to reduce taxes is to reduce the number of counties, and thus relieve the taxpayers of so much over-government.

A more or less definite and comprehensive scheme has been proposed for the consolidation of the counties of Kentucky. Assuming that there are fifteen offices in each of the 120 counties, or a total of 1800 county officials in the state, with an annual expenditure

of $2,000 per year, this means a total cost of $3,600,000 for the item of administrative overhead alone. With this thought in mind, it has been suggested that the state be recast into some twenty counties, and these new units be grouped around twenty towns centrally located in the new units, and easily accessible to all citizens of the new areas. Under this scheme each county would have an average area of 2,029 square miles and an average population of some 120,000. Assuming the same number of offices per county as under the present scheme, this would mean a reduction of offices from 1800 to 300, and with the same cost per office, there would be a total expenditure of only $600,000 as compared with $3,600,000 under the present scheme—or a saving of $3,000,000 annually for the item of upkeep alone.

SUMMARY OF OTHER STATES

Other consolidation movements which bid fair to achieve concrete results within the next few years may be summarized as follows: Idaho—the state chamber of commerce has prepared a proposed constitutional amendment providing for consolidation of counties if approved by local referendum; Illinois—the board of supervisors of Sangamon county has proposed the consolidation of the 102 Illinois counties to 52; Missouri—a constitutional amendment reducing the 114 counties to 40 has been proposed by Attorney-General Shartel; Mississippi—reduction of the number of counties from 82 to 40 is recommended in the report of a survey conducted by the Brookings Institution for the Research Commission of the state of Mississippi; Oklahoma—a plan to reduce the number of counties in Oklahoma from 77 to 20 has been advanced by the state chamber of commerce; Texas—Frank Putnam of Houston, former newspaperman and later candidate for governor, is author of a plan to consolidate the 250 Texas counties to 50; Washington—Alvin Collin, county commission of Spokane, urges consolidation of the 39 counties into 7; Senator Dan Landon announces his intention of introducing a bill providing for county consolidation into the next legislature; Wisconsin—leading newspapers including both the Milwaukee *Sentinel* and the Milwaukee *Journal* are advocating consolidation of counties.

Functional Realignment vs. County Consolidation

VARYING functions demand varying areas of administration. Combining counties gives no assurance that a proper unit for all services will be secured

BY CONRAD H. HAMMAR *University of Missouri*

THE total assessed valuation of Jackson County, Missouri, in 1930 was 175 times that of Ozark County. Yet, the number of county officers and the organization of government were very much the same. In Jackson County the officials presided over $658,863,000 in taxable property and a population of 470,454. In Ozark County a similar group of officials administered the affairs of government for 9,537 people and $3,756,540 of property. In Texas County, officials are charged with 1159 square miles of area and in Worth County a like group administers only 265 square miles, or less than one fourth as much.

Inconsistencies such as these are rife among Missouri counties.[1] Insistently the query arises could not a large number of counties be eliminated with a most acceptable reduction in expense to taxpayers?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Three approaches to the answer are easily distinguishable. The first is the county consolidation program. The second proposes to combine offices within the county, and the third seeks to reduce expenses by adapting the unit of administration to the office while leaving the number of offices the same. In other words, the assessor instead of having a county will have a district[2] and in like manner the county attorney, collector, treasurer, school superintendent and so on will be given areas of administration that will better fit their capacities. No one assumes that an accurate fit is secured at present. The second and third approaches above may be combined into one and called the functional program.

The county consolidation program has some advantages that may be scored up for it. It is easy to comprehend and has an appeal to all who look back to the formation of counties during the horse and buggy days and contrast the slow locomotion of that era with the swiftness of the modern automobile.

The county consolidation program is, furthermore, already under way and has the advantage of according with present usage. In both Tennessee and Georgia, county consolidations have already been effected and in many other states the movement has gained a discernible headway.

WEAKNESSES OF CONSOLIDATION

The county consolidation program has its disadvantages, however. Its most serious error from the viewpoint of governmental reform is that it regards

[1] With special reference to Missouri.

[2] See for instance item 3 of the Program for County Government proposed by the Taxpayers' League of St. Louis County, Minnesota, page 561 of the 1930 volume of the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW.

all offices in the county as suited to the same unit of administration. But can county courts, assessors, collectors, clerks, school superintendents and other officers be counted as well adapted to the same unit of area, population or assessed valuation? Little research bearing directly on this point is available and none of it pertains to Missouri. Only by a very strange coincidence, however, would all offices and officers be suited well by the same unit of administration. And when to this fact is added the great unlikeness of existing counties the chance that officers and tasks are well suited becomes remote indeed. Misfits, one concludes, must be the rule rather than the exception.

Furthermore, what assurance can be given that the proper unit of administration will be hit upon merely by combining two or more counties? Most Missouri counties have fourteen different administrative offices. Under the most exacting efforts it is hardly conceivable that a single county could be made to fit equally well all fourteen. The task would be difficult enough if there were only three or four offices instead of more than a dozen.

Even if a fair suiting of capacities could be attained there is no assurance that further economic, political and social changes will not make the enlarged county as obsolete fifty or a hundred years hence as the present county is now. The county of today has proved inflexible in the face of change. Merely enlarging it will not make it more flexible. County consolidation faces the prospect that combining counties and heightening their importance as governmental units may increase an inflexibility that has not been counted desirable.

Increasing the importance of county units runs into a still further difficulty. Suppose our 114 Missouri counties were combined into a mere ten or a dozen. So large and strong would these fewer counties each become that they would, in many respects, rival the state government itself. Even now, intractable county officers can go far in defying state supervision. The risk of setting up smaller "states" within the larger one with all the discord that would result therefrom is imminent in the county consolidation program.

A difficulty of a more practical and immediate nature is the official antagonism that a program of county consolidation will inevitably encounter.

AN APPROPRIATE UNIT FOR EACH SERVICE

The functional program avoids many of the difficulties of the county consolidation and has some advantages of its own.

To begin with there need be no thought of destroying the present counties as a whole, if the assumption is allowed that these may be made fairly effective units for the voting of and administration of expenses. A certain cohesion is desirable, if not necessary, for the adoption of local improvement measures. Furthermore, certain county offices may be found to fit fairly well into the majority of counties as they now are.

For the majority of the offices in the county, however, the functional program contemplates either a merging with other offices or an adjustment of the office to a very different unit of administration. The idea of merging is used also in connection with the county consolidation program but has as its objective the better adaptation of official and task whether the units of administration be the present counties or a grouping of counties.

Just what the new units of administration shall be, the functional program, as yet, is unable to say. Indeed, it begins with the admission that it does not know and makes a definite place on its agenda for research in the matter. It has little hesitancy in stating its belief

that the proper units for the various offices will be quite different and it visualizes a series of non-coterminous districts in which various offices are functioning under the direct supervision of the state. It maintains that the task of assessing differs greatly from that of collecting or superintending schools or supervising roads, and that it is ludicrous to suppose that all these offices can be expected to operate efficiently in districts of the same size.

Indeed, it looks upon the economical performance of the particular duty with which the officer and office is charged as paramount and refuses to regard such districts as are set up as necessarily permanent. Changes in technique are inevitable. With airplane photography at their command, a very much smaller group of assessors may well be able to perform the task of appraising rural real estate than is now required. Photostating and other mechanical devices are constantly reducing the routine work in the office of recorder of deeds. The automobile greatly enlarges the area of supervision for the superintendent of schools, and engineering technique and the desire for continuous good roads demands that the function of the road engineer extend across county lines. Flexibility in the face of such changes the functional program seeks to provide and on that score counts itself far superior to the county consolidation program.

Clashes over jurisdiction with the state government that are likely to be a prominent disadvantage in the case of a few large counties are almost completely avoided. In fact, a far more direct supervision of state officials in the interest of an improved efficiency in the performance of the various governmental functions is regarded as advisable.[3]

[3] On this point see page 6, National Municipal Review, January, 1929, "A Wet Blanket on the County Manager Plan" by Kirk H. Porter. Also article by Mr. Porter in this issue.

In this same connection, the functional program has greater promise of control over county officials. Control by the electorate under present conditions is remote and loose. After the periodic elections each office in the court house tends to become a kingdom unto itself. The county court, technically in charge in Missouri, exercises only a nominal control and hesitates to interfere, even in flagrant cases, with the conduct in office of men elected directly by the people.

WILL NOT DISTURB THE COUNTY SEAT

Tactically, the functional program is superior to the county consolidation program in that its attack is directed at a single office rather than the whole group of offices and in that it anticipates leaving present counties and county seats intact to serve certain purposes as stated above. While the possibilities of wiping out entire counties in the face of official and local antagonism is remote, changes involving single offices may be engineered with much less difficulty. The rationalization of the single office may, furthermore, proceed by a series of steps toward its objective and thus further elude the antagonism engendered by the proposal to rob a town or city of its county seat prerogatives at a single stroke. The steps proposed in a forthcoming Missouri study[4] of the assessor's office for illustration are (1) establishing state supervision of assessments by placing appointed supervisors in nine districts composed of from 12 to 14 counties each, (2) with the aid of these supervisors, discovering the most effective methods of appraising property for taxation, (3) with such information at hand, establishing the proper area unit for assessment administration, and securing the adoption of these units for the election of the assessor. A further step that might easily prove feasible would be that of having assessors ap-

[4] See Mo. Ag. Exp. Sta. Research Bul. No. 169 by the author.

pointed rather than elected and directly subordinate to the supervisor and acting as his deputies. Obviously, the way is open for still further steps if changes make them advisable. Similar steps softening the break from present practices to more desirable ones could be outlined for other offices.

A standardization of personnel, not possible under present county organization, is facilitated by this functionalizing of government as proposed above. Ultimately the functional program aims at appointed rather than elected officials. Furthermore, the great disparity in the size of counties and the varying responsibilities placed upon officers at present works toward a lack of uniformity in the governmental services that has no rational basis for being. Why should one child have the advantage of public educational supervision at the hands of a man of high capabilities and able to earn a salary of $5000 a year, while the guidance of another child is entrusted to an officer with much inferior qualifications? Present counties perpetuate such anomalies. County consolidation would mitigate them in part. An even more thorough-going reform is possible where such governmental services are divorced from local attachments and their performance judged from a statewide viewpoint.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

Some objections to the functional program have been raised. For those interested in immediate reform it is considered altogether too painstaking and slow. Years will be required to put its proposals into effect and, in the meantime, present high costs will continue. Furthermore, its cautious procedure by steps and its never ending program means a constant irritation of local officials and people. It necessitates, also, a continuous marshalling of public opinion in the interest of reform, a process that is difficult and sometimes expensive. Better, it has been argued, arouse public opinion thoroughly and effect considerable changes all at once. Such arguments have some force, but counter to them is the great possibility of failure if the pace is too fast, and the fact that governmental reform is likely, under any circumstances, to be a continuing process and in any event cannot be thoroughly done by a single *coup d'etat*.

A greater break with present practices and forms of government is also counted as a disadvantage. People will have more difficulty in grasping the need for rationalizing each office and function of government separately than they will in discerning the need for enlarging the size of the county and doing away with unnecessary governmental duplication. Doing away with an expensive county government will draw some support; mere remodeling of the assessor's office will encounter great indifference. Indifference may well, however, be easier to overcome than open antagonism and may be counted, in some respects, an advantage.

The allocation of costs of maintenance and operation when functions are performed without reference to county lines may present some, though no very serious, difficulties. Much more serious is the objection that is likely to arise in the local community against the relinquishing of control of many of their customary governmental prerogatives to the state. Tradition runs strong in many counties. What assurance have local people that services, at once better and less expensive, will be provided by the state? Fortunately, precedents in education and roads, our two most expensive local functions, are already available. Very few would argue for a return of roads to purely local control and a revision of control with regard to education, emphasizing the responsibility of the state has already occurred in Missouri. Nevertheless, the strong sentiment for local control is probably the most serious difficulty that the functional program has to face.

The League's Committee on County Government

PROGRESS report of a committee destined to national leadership in county government reform

BY JOHN A. FAIRLIE *Chairman*

THE Committee on County Government of the National Municipal League, appointed in the summer of 1931, has held four meetings: at Buffalo, New York, in November; at Washington, D. C., in December; at Chicago, in May, 1932; and at the University of Virginia in July, 1932. At these meetings plans and proposals have been discussed, and considerable progress has been made in formulating recommendations in some parts of the field.

COMMITTEE PERSONNEL

As now constituted, the committee consists of the following members: Frank O. Lowden, Oregon, Illinois, *honorary chairman*; John A. Fairlie, University of Illinois, *chairman;* William Anderson, University of Minnesota; R. C. Atkinson, Ohio Institute, Columbus, Ohio; Frank Bane, American Public Welfare Association, Chicago; F. G. Bates, Indiana University; Arthur W. Bromage, University of Michigan; John Calahan, Department of Public Instruction, Madison; Richard S. Childs, New York; Edwin A. Cottrell, Stanford University; Clark Foreman, Chicago; Harry H. Freeman, Buffalo Municipal Research Bureau; Mrs. Walter S. Greenough, Indianapolis; Luther Gulick, Institute of Public Administration; A. R. Hatton, Northwestern University; Howard P. Jones, National Municipal League; J. Catron Jones, University of Kentucky; Mrs. Siegel W. Judd, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wylie Kilpatrick, New Jersey State League of Municipalities; Walter F. Kirk, Ohio State Grange; Harley L. Lutz, Princeton University; Theodore B. Manny, United States department of agriculture; Kirk H. Porter, State University of Iowa; Hugh Reid, Washington, D. C.; C. E. Rightor, Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research; Walter R. Sharp, University of Wisconsin; Charles P. Taft 2nd, Cincinnati, Ohio; Robert H. Tucker, Washington and Lee University; Paul W. Wager, University of North Carolina; C. R. White, New York State Farm Bureau Federation.

It will be noted that the committee includes members from a considerable number of states, in different sections of the country, and from various institutions and organizations—research bureaus, official commissions, state municipal leagues, rural organizations, and universities.

Before the Buffalo meeting, held in connection with the annual meeting of the National Municipal League, preliminary assignments had been made to several sub committees; and tentative suggestions from some of these were presented and informally discussed. A more definite plan of sub committees was adopted, to deal with constitutional provisions, consolidation and coöpera-

tion of counties, the organization of county government, the relation of the county to the state, the position of townships, financial provisions, and personnel problems.

MODEL CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

At the Washington meeting, preliminary reports were presented from the subcommittees on constitutional provisions, local organization and the position of the township. These were discussed in connection with recent reports by official commissions and important changes made in local government in New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia, and extended investigations under way in Michigan and other states. Tentative agreement was reached on various general principles. It was decided to undertake the definite formulation of advisable constitutional provisions on local government; and to continue the study of other problems, with a view to determining the substantive elements of statutory or charter provisions. It was agreed that alternative methods might be necessary in some matters, to promote the adoption of improvements more immediately practicable, as well as more fundamental changes. The desirability of undertaking to draft a comprehensive statute or charter was discussed, and action on this was postponed until further progress had been made.

At the Chicago meeting, a chart of existing constitutional provisions on county government, and a statement on constitutional obstacles to improvement in county government was submitted by Mr. Jones, with a draft of proposed constitutional provisions. These were discussed in detail, in connection with the proposed county government amendment to the Ohio constitution; and tentative agreement was reached on the content of the proposed provisions, to be submitted to the other members of the committee. This included provisions as to general and optional laws on county government, and county home rule charters, and provisions for the transfer of functions from smaller units so as to permit a consolidated or federated local government.

COUNTY ORGANIZATION

A plan of county organization, presented by Mr. Atkinson, was also discussed in detail; and tentative agreement was reached as to the main provisions, for submission to the other members of the committee. This included provisions as to the composition, powers, and duties of the county board, a county manager (with alternative suggestions) and suggestions as to departmental organization.

Consideration was also given to a report by Mr. Bromage on the position of the township.

At the July meeting in Virginia, definitive action was taken approving the proposed constitutional provisions on local government, and recommending their publication, with the article on existing constitutional obstacles. Further consideration was given to the plan of county organization, and the main features were approved. The report on the position of the township was also considered, and it was agreed that this should be expanded in some respects.

A number of factors make the task of this committee one of great difficulty, requiring a considerable time for its completion: The magnitude and complicity of the problem, especially in view of widely varying conditions in different states and sections of the country; the size of the committee which these conditions make necessary; and the absence of funds for travel expenses. The latter considerations have made it necessary to hold meetings at which only some of the members can attend. This, however, makes it possible to reach preliminary agreements for submission to the whole committee.

A Bibliography on County Government

A SELECTED list of the leading articles and publications relating to county government which have appeared since 1920

BY INA CLEMENT

Princeton University Library

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